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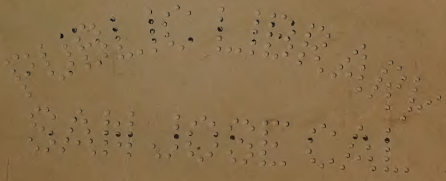

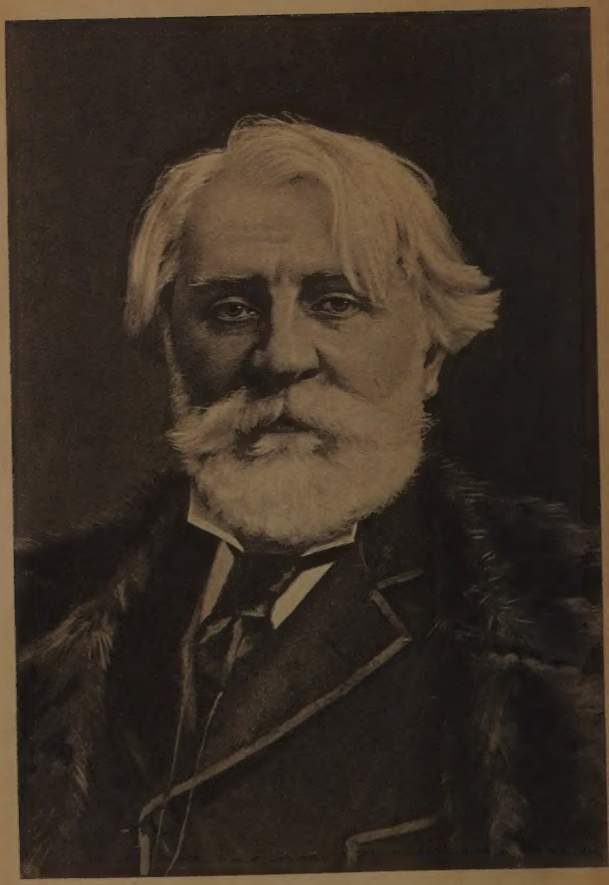

THE NOVELS AND STORIES OF
IVÁN TURGÉNIEFF

MEMOIRS OF A SPORTSMAN

I

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
ISABEL F. HAPGOOD

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HENRY JAMES

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1903

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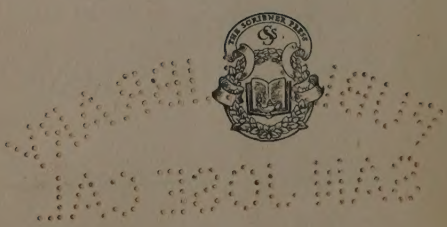

IVÁN TURGÉNIEFF

BY HENRY JAMES

When the mortal remains of Iván Turgénieff[1] were about to be transported from Paris for interment in his own country, a short commemorative service was held at the Gare du Nord. Ernest Renan and Edmond About, standing beside the train in which his coffin had been placed, bade farewell in the name of the French people to the illustrious stranger who for so many years had been their honoured and grateful guest. M. Renan made a beautiful speech, and M. About a very clever one, and each of them characterised, with ingenuity, the genius and the moral nature of the most touching of writers, the most lovable of men. "Turgénieff," said M. Renan, "received by the mysterious decree which marks out human vocations the gift which is noble beyond all others: he was born essentially impersonal." The passage is so eloquent that one must repeat the whole of it. "His conscience was not that of an individual to whom nature had been more or less generous: it was in

[1] Turgénieff died in September, 1883.

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some sort the conscience of a people. Before he was born he had lived for thousands of years; infinite successions of reveries had amassed themselves in the depths of his heart. No man has been as much as he the incarnation of a whole race: generations of ancestors, lost in the sleep of centuries, speechless, came through him to life and utterance."

I quote these lines for the pleasure of quoting them; for while I see what M. Renan means by calling Turgénieff impersonal, it has been my wish to devote to his delightful memory a few pages written under the impression of contact and intercourse. He seems to us impersonal, because it is from his writings almost alone that we of English, French, and German speech have derived our notions—even yet, I fear, rather meagre and erroneous—of the Russian people. His genius for us is the Slav genius; his voice the voice of those vaguely-imagined multitudes whom we think of more and more to-day as waiting their turn, in the arena of civilisation, in the grey expanses of the North. There is much in his writings to encourage this view, and it is certain that he interpreted with wonderful vividness the temperament of his fellow-countrymen. Cosmopolite that he had become by the force of circumstances, his roots had never been loosened in his native soil. The ignorance with regard to Russia and the Russians which he found in abun-

dance in the rest of Europe—and not least in the country he inhabited for ten years before his death—had indeed the effect, to a certain degree, to throw him back upon the deep feelings which so many of his companions were unable to share with him, the memories of his early years, the sense of wide Russian horizons, the joy and pride of his mother-tongue. In the collection of short pieces, so deeply interesting, written during the last few years of his life, and translated into German under the name of "Senilia," I find a passage—it is the last in the little book—which illustrates perfectly this reactionary impulse: "In days of doubt, in days of anxious thought on the destiny of my native land, thou alone art my support and my staff, O great powerful Russian tongue, truthful and free! If it were not for thee how should man not despair at the sight of what is going on at home? But it is inconceivable that such a language has not been given to a great people." This Muscovite, home-loving note pervades his productions, though it is between the lines, as it were, that we must listen for it. None the less does it remain true that he was not a simple conduit or mouthpiece; the inspiration was his own as well as the voice. He was an individual, in other words, of the most unmistakable kind, and those who had the happiness to know him have no difficulty to-day in thinking of him as an eminent, responsible fig-

ure. This pleasure, for the writer of these lines, was as great as the pleasure of reading the admirable tales into which he put such a world of life and feeling: it was perhaps even greater, for it was not only with the pen that nature had given Turgénieff the power to express himself. He was the richest, the most delightful, of talkers, and his face, his person, his temper, the thoroughness with which he had been equipped for human intercourse, make in the memory of his friends an image which is completed, but not thrown into the shade, by his literary distinction. The whole image is tinted with sadness: partly because the element of melancholy in his nature was deep and constant—readers of his novels have no need to be told of that; and partly because, during the last years of his life, he had been condemned to suffer atrociously. Intolerable pain had been his portion for too many months before he died; his end was not a soft decline, but a deepening distress. But of brightness, of the faculty of enjoyment, he had also the large allowance usually made to first-rate men, and he was a singularly complete human being. The author of these pages had greatly admired his writings before having the fortune to make his acquaintance, and this privilege, when it presented itself, was highly illuminating. The man and the writer together occupied from that moment a very high place in his affection. Some

time before knowing him I committed to print certain reflections which his tales had led me to make; and I may perhaps, therefore, without impropriety give them a supplement which shall have a more vivifying reference. It is almost irresistible to attempt to say, from one's own point of view, what manner of man he was.

It was in consequence of the article I just mentioned that I found reason to meet him, in Paris, where he was then living, in 1875. I shall never forget the impression he made upon me at that first interview. I found him adorable; I could scarcely believe that he would prove—that any man could prove—on nearer acquaintance so delightful as that. Nearer acquaintance only confirmed my hope, and he remained the most approachable, the most practicable, the least unsafe man of genius it has been my fortune to meet. He was so simple, so natural, so modest, so destitute of personal pretension and of what is called the consciousness of powers, that one almost doubted at moments whether he were a man of genius after all. Everything good and fruitful lay near to him; he was interested in everything; and he was absolutely without that eagerness of self-reference which sometimes accompanies great, and even small, reputations. He had not a particle of vanity; nothing whatever of the air of having a part to play or a reputation to keep up. His humour exercised itself as freely upon

himself as upon other subjects, and he told stories at his own expense with a sweetness of hilarity which made his peculiarities really sacred in the eyes of a friend. I remember vividly the smile and tone of voice with which he once repeated to me a figurative epithet which Gustave Flaubert (of whom he was extremely fond) had applied to him—an epithet intended to characterise a certain expansive softness, a comprehensive indecision, which pervaded his nature, just as it pervades so many of the characters he has painted. He enjoyed Flaubert's use of this term, good-naturedly opprobrious, more even than Flaubert himself, and recognised perfectly the element of truth in it. He was natural to an extraordinary degree; I do not think I have ever seen his match in this respect, certainly not among people who bear, as he did, at the same time, the stamp of the highest cultivation. Like all men of a large pattern, he was composed of many different pieces; and what was always striking in him was the mixture of simplicity with the fruit of the most various observation. In the little article in which I had attempted to express my admiration for his works, I had been moved to say of him that he had the aristocratic temperament: a remark which in the light of further knowledge seemed to me singularly inane. He was not subject to any definition of that sort, and to say that he was democratic would be (though his political

ideal was a democracy) to give an equally superficial account of him. He felt and understood the opposite sides of life; he was imaginative, speculative, anything but literal. He had not in his mind a grain of prejudice as large as the point of a needle, and people (there are many) who think this a defect would have missed it immensely in Iván Serguéitch. (I give his name, without attempting the Russian orthography, as it was uttered by his friends when they addressed him in French.) Our Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, moralistic, conventional standards were far away from him, and he judged things with a freedom and spontaneity in which I found a perpetual refreshment. His sense of beauty, his love of truth and right, were the foundation of his nature; but half the charm of conversation with him was that one breathed an air in which cant phrases and arbitrary measurements simply sounded ridiculous.

I may add that it was not because I had written a laudatory article about his books that he gave me a friendly welcome; for in the first place my article could have very little importance for him, and in the second it had never been either his habit or his hope to bask in the light of criticism. Supremely modest as he was, I think he attached no great weight to what might happen to be said about him; for he felt that he was destined to encounter a very small amount of in-

telligent appreciation, especially in foreign countries. I never heard him even allude to any judgment which might have been passed upon his productions in England. In France he knew that he was read very moderately; the "demand" for his volumes was small, and he had no illusions whatever on the subject of his popularity. He had heard with pleasure that many intelligent persons in the United States were impatient for everything that might come from his pen; but I think he was never convinced, as one or two of the more zealous of these persons had endeavoured to convince him, that he could boast of a "public" in America. He gave me the impression of thinking of criticism as most serious workers think of it—that it is the amusement, the exercise, the subsistence of the critic (and, so far as this goes, of immense use); but that though it may often concern other readers, it does not much concern the artist himself. In comparison with all those things which the production of a considered work forces the artist little by little to say to himself, the remarks of the critic are vague and of the moment; and yet, owing to the large publicity of the proceeding, they have a power to irritate or discourage which is quite out of proportion to their use to the person criticised. It was not, moreover (if this explanation be not more gross than the spectre it is meant to conjure away), on account of any es-

teem which he accorded to my own productions (I used regularly to send them to him) that I found him so agreeable, for to the best of my belief he was unable to read them. As regards one of the first that I had offered him he wrote me a little note to tell me that a distinguished friend, who was his constant companion, had read three or four chapters aloud to him the evening before and that one of them was written *de main de maître!* This gave me great pleasure, but it was my first and last pleasure of the kind. I continued, as I say, to send him my fictions, because they were the only thing I had to give; but he never alluded to the rest of the work in question, which he evidently did not finish, and never gave any sign of having read its successors. Presently I quite ceased to expect this, and saw why it was (it interested me much) that my writings could not appeal to him. He cared, more than anything else, for the air of reality, and my reality was not to the purpose. I do not think my stories struck him as quite meat for men. The manner was more apparent than the matter; they were too *tarabiscoté,* as I once heard him say of the style of a book—had on the surface too many little flowers and knots of ribbon. He had read a great deal of English, and knew the language remarkably well—too well, I used often to think, for he liked to speak it with those to whom it was native, and, successful as the

effort always was, it deprived him of the facility and raciness with which he expressed himself in French.

I have said that he had no prejudices, but perhaps after all he had one. I think he imagined it to be impossible to a person of English speech to converse in French with complete correctness. He knew Shakespeare thoroughly, and at one time had wandered far and wide in English literature. His opportunities for speaking English were not at all frequent, so that when the necessity (or at least the occasion) presented itself, he remembered the phrases he had encountered in books. This often gave a charming quaintness and an unexpected literary turn to what he said. "In Russia, in spring, if you enter a beechen grove"—those words come back to me from the last time I saw him. He continued to read English books and was not incapable of attacking the usual Tauchnitz novel. The English writer (of our day) of whom I remember to have heard him speak with most admiration was Dickens, of whose faults he was conscious, but whose power of presenting to the eye a vivid, salient figure he rated very high. In the young French school he was much interested; I mean, in the new votaries of realism, the grandsons of Balzac. He was a good friend of most of them, and with Gustave Flaubert, the most singular and most original of the group, he was altogether intimate.

He had his reservations and discriminations, and he had, above all, the great back-garden of his Slav imagination and his Germanic culture, into which the door constantly stood open, and the grandsons of Balzac were not, I think, particularly free to accompany him. But he had much sympathy with their experiment, their general movement, and it was on the side of the careful study of life as the best line of the novelist that, as may easily be supposed, he ranged himself. For some of the manifestations of the opposite tradition he had a great contempt. This was a kind of emotion he rarely expressed, save in regard to certain public wrongs and iniquities; bitterness and denunciation seldom passed his mild lips. But I remember well the little flush of conviction, the seriousness, with which he once said, in allusion to a novel which had just been running through the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* "If I had written anything so bad as that I should blush for it all my life."

His was not, I should say, predominantly, or even in a high degree, the artistic nature, though it was deeply, if I may make the distinction, the poetic. But during the last twelve years of his life he lived much with artists and men of letters, and he was eminently capable of kindling in the glow of discussion. He cared for questions of form, though not in the degree in which Flaubert and Edmond de Goncourt cared for them, and

he had very lively sympathies. He had a great regard for Madame George Sand, the head and front of the old romantic tradition; but this was on general grounds, quite independent of her novels, which he never read, and which she never expected him, or apparently any one else, to read. He thought her character remarkably noble and sincere. He had, as I have said, a great affection for Gustave Flaubert, who returned it; and he was much interested in Flaubert's extraordinary attempts at bravery of form and of matter, knowing perfectly well when they failed. During those months which it was Flaubert's habit to spend in Paris, Turgénieff went almost regularly to see him on Sunday afternoon, and was so good as to introduce me to the author of "Madame Bovary," in whom I saw many reasons for Turgénieff's regard. It was on these Sundays, in Flaubert's little salon, which, at the top of a house at the end of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, looked rather bare and provisional, that, in the company of the other familiars of the spot, more than one of whom[1] have commemorated these occasions, Turgénieff's beautiful faculty of talk showed at its best. He was easy, natural, abundant, more than I can describe, and everything that he said was touched with the exquisite quality of his imagination. What was discussed in that little smoke-clouded room was chiefly

[1] Maxime Du Camp, Alphonse Daudet, Emile Zola.

questions of taste, questions of art and form; and the speakers, for the most part, were in æsthetic matters radicals of the deepest dye. It would have been late in the day to propose among them any discussion of the relation of art to morality, any question as to the degree in which a novel might or might not concern itself with the teaching of a lesson. They had settled these preliminaries long ago, and it would have been primitive and incongruous to recur to them. The conviction that held them together was the conviction that art and morality are two perfectly different things, and that the former has no more to do with the latter than it has with astronomy or embryology. The only duty of a novel was to be well written; that merit included every other of which it was capable. This state of mind was never more apparent than one afternoon when *ces messieurs* delivered themselves on the subject of an incident which had just befallen one of them. "L'Assommoir" of Emile Zola had been discontinued in the journal through which it was running as a serial, in consequence of repeated protests from the subscribers. The subscriber, as a type of human imbecility, received a wonderful dressing, and the Philistine in general was roughly handled. There were gulfs of difference between Turgénieff and Zola, but Turgénieff, who, as I say, understood everything, understood Zola too, and rendered perfect justice to the high

solidity of much of his work. His attitude, at such times, was admirable and I could imagine nothing more genial or more fitted to give an idea of light, easy, human intelligence. No one could desire more than he that art should be art; always, ever, incorruptibly, art. To him this proposition would have seemed as little in need of proof, or susceptible of refutation, as the axiom that law should always be law or medicine always medicine. As much as any one he was prepared to take note of the fact that the demand for abdications and concessions never comes from artists themselves, but always from purchasers, editors, subscribers. I am pretty sure that his word about all this would have been that he could not quite see what was meant by the talk about novels being moral or the reverse; that a novel could no more propose to itself to be moral than a painting or a symphony, and that it was arbitrary to lay down a distinction between the numerous forms of art. He was the last man to be blind to their unity. I suspect that he would have said, in short, that distinctions were demanded in the interest of the moralists, and that the demand was indelicate, owing to their want of jurisdiction. Yet at the same time that I make this suggestion as to his state of mind, I remember how little he struck me as bound by mere neatness of formula, how little there was in him of the partisan or the pleader. What he thought of the

relation of art to life his stories, after all, show better than anything else. The immense variety of life was ever present to his mind, and he would never have argued the question I have just hinted at in the interest of particular liberties—the liberties that were apparently the dearest to his French *confrères*. It was this air that he carried about with him of feeling all the variety of life, of knowing strange and far-off things, of having an horizon in which the Parisian horizon—so familiar, so wanting in mystery, so perpetually *exploité*—easily lost itself, that distinguished him from these companions. He was not all there, as the phrase is; he had something behind, in reserve. It was Russia, of course, in a large measure; and, especially before the spectacle of what is going on there to-day, that was a large quantity. But so far as he was on the spot, he was an element of pure sociability.

I did not intend to go into these details immediately, for I had only begun to say what an impression of magnificent manhood he made upon me when I first knew him. That impression, indeed, always remained with me, even after it had been brought home to me how much there was in him of the quality of genius. He was a beautiful intellect, of course, but above all he was a delightful, mild, masculine figure. The combination of his deep, soft, lovable spirit, in which one felt all the tender parts of genius, with his

immense, fair Russian physique, was one of the most attractive things conceivable. He had a frame which would have made it perfectly lawful, and even becoming, for him to be brutal; but there was not a grain of brutality in his composition. He had always been a passionate sportsman; to wander in the woods or the steppes, with his dog and gun, was the pleasure of his heart. Late in life he continued to shoot, and he had a friend in Cambridgeshire for the sake of whose partridges, which were famous, he used sometimes to cross the Channel. It would have been impossible to imagine a better representation of a Nimrod of the north. He was exceedingly tall, and broad and robust in proportion. His head was one of the finest, and though the line of his features was irregular, there was a great deal of beauty in his face. It was eminently of the Russian type—almost everything in it was wide. His expression had a singular sweetness, with a touch of Slav languor, and his eye, the kindest of eyes, was deep and melancholy. His hair, abundant and straight, was as white as silver, and his beard, which he wore trimmed rather short, was of the colour of his hair. In all his tall person, which was very striking wherever it appeared, there was an air of neglected strength, as if it had been a part of his modesty never to remind himself that he was strong. He used sometimes to blush like a boy of sixteen.

He had very few forms and ceremonies, and almost as little manner as was possible to a man of his natural *prestance*. His noble appearance was in itself a manner; but whatever he did he did very simply, and he had not the slightest pretension to not being subject to rectification. I never saw any one receive it with less irritation. Friendly, candid, unaffectedly benignant, the impression that he produced most strongly and most generally was, I think, simply that of goodness.

When I made his acquaintance he had been living, since his removal from Baden-Baden, which took place in consequence of the Franco-Prussian war, in a large detached house on the hill of Montmartre, with his friends of many years, Madame Pauline Viardot and her husband, as his fellow-tenants. He occupied the upper floor, and I like to recall, for the sake of certain delightful talks, the aspect of his little green sitting-room, which has, in memory, the consecration of irrecoverable hours. It was almost entirely green, and the walls were not covered with paper, but draped in stuff. The *portières* were green, and there was one of those immense divans, so indispensable to Russians, which had apparently been fashioned for the great person of the master, so that smaller folk had to lie upon it rather than sit. I remember the white light of the Paris street, which came

in through windows more or less blinded in their lower part, like those of a studio. It rested, during the first years that I went to see Turgénieff, upon several choice pictures of the modern French school, especially upon a very fine specimen of Théodore Rousseau, which he valued exceedingly. He had a great love of painting, and was an excellent critic of a picture. The last time I saw him—it was at his house in the country—he showed me half a dozen large copies of Italian works, made by a young Russian in whom he was interested, which he had, with characteristic kindness, taken into his own apartments in order that he might bring them to the knowledge of his friends. He thought them, as copies, remarkable; and they were so, indeed, especially when one perceived that the original work of the artist had little value. Turgénieff warmed to the work of praising them, as he was very apt to do; like all men of imagination, he had frequent and zealous admirations. As a matter of course there was almost always some young Russian in whom he was interested, and refugees and pilgrims of both sexes were his natural clients. I have heard it said by persons who had known him long and well that these enthusiasms sometimes led him into error, that he was apt to *se monter la tête* on behalf of his protégés. He was prone to believe that he had discovered the coming Russian genius; he talked about his discovery for a

month, and then suddenly one heard no more of it. I remember his once telling me of a young woman who had come to see him on her return from America, where she had been studying obstetrics at some medical college, and who, without means and without friends, was in want of help and of work. He accidentally learned that she had written something, and asked her to let him see it. She sent it to him, and it proved to be a tale in which certain phases of rural life were described with striking truthfulness. He perceived in the young lady a great natural talent; he sent her story off to Russia to be printed, with the conviction that it would make a great impression, and he expressed the hope of being able to introduce her to French readers. When I mentioned this to an old friend of Turgénieff he smiled, and said that we should not hear of her again, that Iván Serguéitch had already discovered a great many surprising talents, which, as a general thing, had not borne the test. There was apparently some truth in this, and Turgénieff's liability to be deceived was too generous a weakness for me to hesitate to allude to it, even after I have insisted on the usual certainty of his taste. He was deeply interested in his young Russians; they were what interested him most in the world. They were almost always unhappy, in want and in rebellion against an order of things which he himself detested. The study of the Russian char-

acter absorbed and fascinated him, as all readers of his stories know. Rich, unformed, undeveloped, with all sorts of adumbrations, of qualities in a state of fusion, it stretched itself out as a mysterious expanse in which it was impossible as yet to perceive the relation between gifts and weaknesses. Of its weaknesses he was keenly conscious, and I once heard him express himself with an energy that did him honour and a frankness that even surprised me (considering that it was of his countrymen that he spoke), in regard to a weakness which he deemed the greatest of all—a weakness for which a man whose love of veracity was his strongest feeling would have least toleration. His young compatriots, seeking their fortune in foreign lands, touched his imagination and his pity, and it is easy to conceive that under the circumstances the impression they often made upon him may have had great intensity. The Parisian background, with its brilliant sameness, its absence of surprises (for those who have known it long), threw them into relief and made him see them as he saw the figures in his tales, in relations, in situations which brought them out. There passed before him in the course of time many wonderful Russian types. He told me once of his having been visited by a religious sect. The sect consisted of but two persons, one of whom was the object of worship and the other the worshipper. The divinity apparently was

travelling about Europe in company with his prophet. They were intensely serious, but it was very handy, as the term is, for each. The god had always his altar, and the altar had (unlike some altars) always its god.

In his little green salon nothing was out of place; there were none of the odds and ends of the usual man of letters, which indeed Turgénieff was not; and the case was the same in his library at Bougival, of which I shall presently speak. Few books even were visible; it was as if everything had been put away. The traces of work had been carefully removed. An air of great comfort, an immeasurable divan and several valuable pictures—that was the effect of the place. I know not exactly at what hours Turgénieff did his work; I think he had no regular times and seasons, being in this respect as different as possible from Anthony Trollope, whose autobiography, with its candid revelation of intellectual economies, is so curious. It is my impression that in Paris Turgénieff wrote little; his times of production being rather those weeks of the summer that he spent at Bougival, and the period of that visit to Russia which he supposed himself to make every year. I say "supposed himself," because it was impossible to see much of him without discovering that he was a man of delays. As on the part of some other Russians whom I have known, there was something Asi-

atic in his faculty of procrastination. But even if one suffered from it a little, one thought of it with kindness, as a part of his general mildness and want of rigidity. He went to Russia, at any rate, at intervals not infrequent, and he spoke of these visits as his best time for production. He had an estate far in the interior, and here, amid the stillness of the country and the scenes and figures which give such a charm to the "Sketches of a Sportsman," he drove his pen without interruption.

It is not out of place to allude to the fact that he possessed considerable fortune; this is too important in the life of a man of letters. It had been of great value to Turgénieff, and I think that much of the fine quality of his work is owing to it. He could write according to his taste and his mood; he was never pressed nor checked (putting the Russian censorship aside) by considerations foreign to his plan, and never was in danger of becoming a hack. Indeed, taking into consideration the absence of a pecuniary spur and that complicated indolence from which he was not exempt, his industry is surprising, for his tales are a long list. In Paris, at all events, he was always open to proposals for the midday breakfast. He liked to breakfast *au cabaret,* and freely consented to an appointment. It is not unkind to add that, at first, he never kept it. I may mention without reserve this idiosyncrasy of Turgé-

nieff's, because in the first place it was so inveterate as to be very amusing—it amused not only his friends but himself; and in the second, he was as sure to come in the end as he was sure not to come in the beginning. After the appointment had been made or the invitation accepted, when the occasion was at hand, there arrived a note or a telegram in which Iván Serguéitch excused himself, and begged that the meeting might be deferred to another date, which he usually himself proposed. For this second date still another was sometimes substituted; but if I remember no appointment that he exactly kept, I remember none that he completely missed. His friends waited for him frequently, but they never lost him. He was very fond of that wonderful Parisian *déjeûner*—fond of it I mean as a feast of reason. He was extremely temperate, and often ate no breakfast at all; but he found it a good hour for talk, and little, on general grounds, as one might be prepared to agree with him, if he was at the table one was speedily convinced. I call it wonderful, the *déjeûner* of Paris, on account of the assurance with which it plants itself in the very middle of the morning. It divides the day between rising and dinner so unequally, and opposes such barriers of repletion to any prospect of ulterior labours, that the unacclimated stranger wonders when the fertile French people do their work. Not the least won-

derful part of it is that the stranger himself likes it, at last, and manages to piece together his day with the shattered fragments that survive. It was not, at any rate, when one had the good fortune to breakfast at twelve o'clock with Turgénieff that one was struck with its being an inconvenient hour. Any hour was convenient for meeting a human being who conformed so completely to one's idea of the best that human nature is capable of. There are places in Paris which I can think of only in relation to some occasion on which he was present, and when I pass them the particular things I heard him say there come back to me. There is a café in the Avenue de l'Opéra—a new, sumptuous establishment, with very deep settees, on the right as you leave the Boulevard—where I once had a talk with him, over an order singularly moderate, which was prolonged far into the afternoon, and in the course of which he was extraordinarily suggestive and interesting, so that my memory now reverts affectionately to all the circumstances. It evokes the grey damp of a Parisian December, which made the dark interior of the café look more and more rich and hospitable, while the light faded, the lamps were lit, the habitués came in to drink absinthe and play their afternoon game of dominoes, and we still lingered over our morning meal. Turgénieff talked almost exclusively about Russia, the nihilists, the remarkable

figures that came to light among them, the curious visits he received, the dark prospects of his native land. When he was in the vein, no man could speak more to the imagination of his auditor. For myself, at least, at such times, there was something extraordinarily vivifying and stimulating in his talk, and I always left him in a state of "intimate" excitement, with a feeling that all sorts of valuable things had been suggested to me; the condition in which a man swings his cane as he walks, leaps lightly over gutters, and then stops, for no reason at all, to look, with an air of being struck, into a shop window where he sees nothing. I remember another symposium, at a restaurant on one of the corners of the little *place* in front of the Opéra Comique, where we were four, including Iván Serguéitch, and the two other guests were also Russian, one of them uniting to the charm of this nationality the merit of a sex that makes the combination irresistible. The establishment had been a discovery of Turgénieff's—a discovery, at least as far as our particular needs were concerned—and I remember that we hardly congratulated him on it. The dinner, in a low entresol, was not what it had been intended to be, but the talk was better even than our expectations. It was not about nihilism but about some more agreeable features of life, and I have no recollection of Turgénieff in a mood more

spontaneous and charming. One of our friends had, when he spoke French, a peculiar way of sounding the word *adorable,* which was frequently on his lips, and I remember well his expressive prolongation of the *a* when, in speaking of the occasion afterwards, he applied this term to Iván Serguéitch. I scarcely know, however, why I should drop into the detail of such reminiscences, and my excuse is but the desire that we all have, when a human relationship is closed, to save a little of it from the past—to make a mark which may stand for some of the happy moments of it.

Nothing that Turgénieff had to say could be more interesting than his talk about his own work, his manner of writing. What I have heard him tell of these things was worthy of the beautiful results he produced; of the deep purpose, pervading them all, to show us life itself. The germ of a story, with him, was never an affair of plot—that was the last thing he thought of: it was the representation of certain persons. The first form in which a tale appeared to him was as the figure of an individual, or a combination of individuals, whom he wished to see in action, being sure that such people must do something very special and interesting. They stood before him definite, vivid, and he wished to know, and to show, as much as possible of their nature. The first thing was to make clear to himself what he did know, to begin with; and to this end,

he wrote out a sort of biography of each of his characters, and everything that they had done and that had happened to them up to the opening of the story. He had their *dossier,* as the French say, and as the police has that of every conspicuous criminal. With this material in his hand he was able to proceed; the story all lay in the question, What shall I make them do? He always made them do things that showed them completely; but, as he said, the defect of his manner and the reproach that was made him was his want of "architecture"—in other words, of composition. The great thing, of course, is to have architecture as well as precious material, as Walter Scott had them, as Balzac had them. If one reads Turgénieff's stories with the knowledge that they were composed—or rather that they came into being—in this way, one can trace the process in every line. Story, in the conventional sense of the word—a fable constructed, like Wordsworth's phantom, "to startle and waylay"—there is as little as possible. The thing consists of the motions of a group of selected creatures, which are not the result of a preconceived action, but a consequence of the qualities of the actors. Works of art are produced from every possible point of view, and stories, and very good ones, will continue to be written in which the evolution is that of a dance—a series of steps, the more complicated and

lively the better, of course, determined from without and forming a figure. This figure will always, probably, find favour with many readers, because it reminds them enough, without reminding them too much, of life. On this opposition many young talents in France are ready to rend each other, for there is a numerous school on either side. We have not yet in England and America arrived at the point of treating such questions with passion, for we have not yet arrived at the point of feeling them intensely, or indeed, for that matter, of understanding them very well. It is not open to us as yet to discuss whether a novel had better be an excision from life or a structure built up of picture-cards, for we have not made up our mind as to whether life in general may be described. There is evidence of a good deal of shyness on this point—a tendency rather to put up fences than to jump over them. Among us, therefore, even a certain ridicule attaches to the consideration of such alternatives. But individuals may feel their way, and perhaps even pass unchallenged, if they remark that for them the manner in which Turgénieff worked will always seem the most fruitful. It has the immense recommendation that in relation to any human occurrence it begins, as it were, further back. It lies in its power to tell us the most about men and women. Of course it will but slenderly satisfy those numerous readers

among whom the answer to this would be, "Hang it, we don't care a straw about men and women: we want a good story!"

And yet, after all, "Elena" is a good story, and "Lisa" and "Virgin Soil" are good stories. Reading over lately several of Turgénieff's novels and tales, I was struck afresh with their combination of beauty and reality. One must never forget, in speaking of him, that he was both an observer and a poet. The poetic element was constant, and it had great strangeness and power. It inspired most of the short things that he wrote during the last few years of his life, since the publication of "Virgin Soil," things that are in the highest degree fanciful and exotic. It pervades the frequent little reveries, visions, epigrams of the "Senilia." It was no part of my intention, here, to criticise his writings, having said my say about them, so far as possible, some years ago. But I may mention that in re-reading them I find in them all that I formerly found of two other elements—their richness and their sadness. They give one the impression of life itself, and not of an arrangement, a *réchauffé* of life. I remember Turgénieff's once saying in regard to Homais, the little Norman country apothecary, with his pedantry of "enlightened opinions," in "Madame Bovary," that the great strength of such a portrait consisted in its being at once an individual, of the most concrete sort,

and a type. This is the great strength of his own representations of character; they are so strangely, fascinatingly particular, and yet they are so recognisably general. Such a remark as that about Homais makes me wonder why it was that Turgénieff should have rated Dickens so high, the weakness of Dickens being in regard to just that point. If Dickens fail to live long, it will be because his figures are particular without being general; because they are individuals without being types; because we do not feel their continuity with the rest of humanity—see the matching of the pattern with the piece out of which all the creations of the novelist and the dramatist are cut. I often meant, but accidentally neglected, to put Turgénieff on the subject of Dickens again, and ask him to explain his opinion. I suspect that his opinion was in a large measure merely that Dickens diverted him, as well he might. That complexity of the pattern was in itself fascinating. I have mentioned Flaubert, and I will return to him simply to say that there was something very touching in the nature of the friendship that united these two men. It is much to the honour of Flaubert, to my sense, that he appreciated Iván Turgénieff. There was a partial similarity between them. Both were large, massive men, though the Russian reached to a greater height than the Norman; both were completely honest and sincere, and both had the

pessimistic element in their composition. Each had a tender regard for the other, and I think that I am neither incorrect nor indiscreet in saying that on Turgénieff's part this regard had in it a strain of compassion. There was something in Gustave Flaubert that appealed to such a feeling. He had failed, on the whole, more than he had succeeded, and the great machinery of erudition,—the great polishing process,—which he brought to bear upon his productions, was not accompanied with proportionate results. He had talent without having cleverness, and imagination without having fancy. His effort was heroic, but, except in the case of "Madame Bovary," a masterpiece, he imparted something to his works (it was as if he had covered them with metallic plates) which made them sink rather than sail. He had a passion for perfection of form and for a certain splendid suggestiveness of style. He wished to produce perfect phrases, perfectly interrelated, and as closely woven together as a suit of chain-mail. He looked at life altogether as an artist, and took his work with a seriousness that never belied itself. To write an admirable page —and his idea of what constituted an admirable page was transcendent—seemed to him something to live for. He tried it again and again, and he came very near it; more than once he touched it, for "Madame Bovary" surely will live. But there was something ungenerous in

his genius. He was cold, and he would have given everything he had to be able to glow. There is nothing in his novels like the passion of Elena for Inssaroff, like the purity of Lisa, like the anguish of the parents of Bazaroff, like the hidden wound of Tatiana; and yet Flaubert yearned, with all the accumulations of his vocabulary, to touch the chord of pathos. There were some parts of his mind that did not "give," that did not render a sound. He had had too much of some sorts of experience and not enough of others. And yet this failure of an organ, as I may call it, inspired those who knew him with a kindness. If Flaubert was powerful and limited, there is something human, after all, and even rather august in a strong man who has not been able completely to express himself.

After the first year of my acquaintance with Turgénieff I saw him much less often. I was seldom in Paris, and sometimes when I was there he was absent. But I neglected no opportunity of seeing him, and fortune frequently assisted me. He came two or three times to London, for visits provokingly brief. He went to shoot in Cambridgeshire, and he passed through town in arriving and departing. He liked the English, but I am not sure that he liked London, where he had passed a lugubrious winter in 1870–71. I remember some of his impressions of that period, especially a visit that he had paid to a "bishop-

ess " surrounded by her daughters, and a description of the cookery at the lodgings which he occupied. After 1876 I frequently saw him as an invalid. He was tormented by gout, and sometimes terribly besieged; but his account of what he suffered was as charming—I can apply no other word to it—as his description of everything else. He had so the habit of observation, that he perceived in excruciating sensations all sorts of curious images and analogies, and analysed them to an extraordinary fineness. Several times I found him at Bougival, above the Seine, in a very spacious and handsome chalet—a little unsunned, it is true—which he had built alongside of the villa occupied by the family to which, for years, his life had been devoted. The place is delightful; the two houses are midway up a long slope, which descends, with the softest inclination, to the river, and behind them the hill rises to a wooded crest. On the left, in the distance, high up and above an horizon of woods, stretches the romantic aqueduct of Marly. It is a very pretty domain. The last time I saw him, in November, 1882, it was at Bougival. He had been very ill, with strange, intolerable symptoms, but he was better, and he had good hopes. They were not justified by the event. He got worse again, and the months that followed were cruel. His beautiful serene mind should not have been darkened and made acquainted with violence; it should have been able

to the last to take part, as it had always done, in the decrees and mysteries of fate. At the moment I saw him, however, he was, as they say in London, in very good form, and my last impression of him was almost bright. He was to drive into Paris, not being able to bear the railway, and he gave me a seat in the carriage. For an hour and a half he constantly talked, and never better. When we got into the city I alighted on the Boulevard Extérieur, as we were to go in different directions. I bade him goodbye at the carriage window, and never saw him again. There was a kind of fair going on, near by, in the chill November air beneath the denuded little trees of the Boulevard, and a Punch and Judy show, from which nasal sounds proceeded. I almost regret having accidentally to mix up so much of Paris with this perhaps too complacent enumeration of occasions, for the effect of it may be to suggest that Iván Turgénieff had been Gallicised. But this was not the case; the French capital was an accident for him, not a necessity. It touched him at many points, but it let him alone at many others, and he had, with that great tradition of ventilation of the Russian mind, windows open into distances which stretched far beyond the *banlieue*. I have spoken of him from the limited point of view of my own acquaintance with him, and unfortunately left myself little space to allude to a matter which filled his exis-

tence a good deal more than the consideration of how a story should be written—his hopes and fears on behalf of his native land. He wrote fictions and dramas, but the great drama of his life was the struggle for a better state of things in Russia. In this drama he played a most distinguished part, and the splendid obsequies that, simple and modest as he was, have unfolded themselves over his grave, sufficiently attest the recognition of it by his countrymen. His funeral, restricted and officialised, was none the less a magnificent "manifestation." I have read the accounts of it, however, with a kind of chill, a feeling in which assent to the honours paid him bore less part than it ought. All this pomp and ceremony seemed to lift him out of the range of familiar recollection, of valued reciprocity, into the majestic position of a national glory. And yet it is in the presence of this obstacle to social contact that those who knew and loved him must address their farewell to him now. After all, it is difficult to see how the obstacle can be removed. He was the most generous, the most tender, the most delightful, of men; his large nature overflowed with the love of justice: but he also was of the stuff of which glories are made.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

It was in 1852 that Turgénieff first conceived the idea of issuing in book form the best of his short stories, which had been appearing during the five years preceding in various periodical publications,—chiefly *The Contemporary*. The episodical character of these "Memoirs of a Sportsman," which then first received their collective title, was thus converted into a complete poem, and the writer's name was immortalised as the author of a complete Odyssey, so to speak, of the epoch of serfdom. The epilogue, "Forest and Steppe," however, really occupies a separate place, like any other romance.

The second separate and independent edition was published in 1859; after which, for twenty years, it was possible to obtain the Memoirs only as a part of the Collected Works. In 1880, the contract (which had been for somewhat over ten thousand rubles for an edition of five thousand copies) expired, and Turgénieff, at the advice of friends, stipulated that he should receive for the third edition (also of five thousand copies) twenty-five thousand rubles, the selling price not to be increased. As the publishers were willing

to give only twenty-two thousand, he was advised to add a new condition: that he reserved to himself the right to publish the "Memoirs of a Sportsman" independently, in order that readers might obtain them without incurring the expense of the entire set. Between 1880 and 1883, six thousand of these separate copies were sold, in addition to five thousand five hundred in the complete sets. Soon after the author's death, in 1883, the sixth edition was issued; other editions have followed.

These "Memoirs of a Sportsman" may be regarded as historical, biographical, and autobiographical, in the fullest and best sense of the words. When the first one was written, Turgénieff was twenty-nine years of age, having been born in 1818. His childhood had been spent among the scenes he has described in them, and many of them are, undoubtedly, taken straight from life. His father, a Colonel of Cuirassiers, belonged to an ancient family of the nobility (gentry), which was descended from a Tatár of the Golden Horde. He married the daughter of a wealthy landed proprietor of the Government of Orél, and settled down on her estate, Spásskoe-Lutovínovo. He was a stern disciplinarian. Turgénieff has described his mother as being a gentlewoman of the purest type from the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, reared in "the French man-

ner." She utterly ignored Russian literature, and barely admitted that Púshkin deserved to be recognised as a writer. Iván Sergyéevitch was, accordingly, educated by many tutors, all French and German. It was his mother's serf valet who initiated him into Russian literature, by taking the little boy on his knees, in a safely remote chamber, and reading to him Kheraskóff's "Rossiad," after the fashion attributed to one of the heroes of "Púnin and Babúrin"—reading each verse first "in rough copy," hastily, then "in clean copy," loudly and with remarkable solemnity.

At the age of fifteen, Turgénieff attended the Moscow University for one year (1833), when—as the family removed to St. Petersburg—he transferred to the University there, completing the course (then of three years) in 1836. While there, he made his first literary effort, a fantastic drama, in iambics, slavishly copied, as to style, from Byron's "Manfred." It was called "Stenio"—rank nonsense, as he himself afterward called it. His first appearance in print was in 1838, when two of his poems, unsigned, were published in *The Contemporary*. After that he studied at the Berlin University (he meditated becoming a pedagogue). Then he spent a couple of years as an official of the Ministry of the Interior,—which he entered because, after a quarrel with his tyrannical and unreasonable mo-

ther, the latter had cut off his financial supplies. Here he passed his time chiefly in reading Georges Sand's romances (1842–1844), and had printed a number of poems. Later still, he wrote the first of the "Memoirs of a Sportsman" (1847).

Most of them, however, were written abroad, whither he betook himself in 1848, intending never to return, because the thought of life in his native land was painful and oppressive. He even remarked, later on: "Had I remained in Russia, I should never have written the 'Memoirs of a Sportsman.'" But his mother's death, at the end of 1850, recalled him to Russia (his father had died long before), and he remained there, continuing the Memoirs until they were first collected and published, as has been said, in 1852. The rumour was current, at the time, in literary circles, that the Moscow censor, Prince Lvoff, was discharged from his office for having authorised this collected publication. It was also thought that this volume was responsible for the arrest and administrative banishment to his estate which overtook Turgénieff in March, 1852, although the nominal cause was his laudatory letter on Gógol, printed, at the time of the latter's death, in the *Moscow News*. The order required him to live on his estate, without leaving it: which did not prevent his making several trips to Moscow before the sentence ended, at

the close of 1854. For a long time thereafter, journalists were afraid to mention his name in print, and he was always referred to under the expression, "a well-known writer."

It must be conceded that these "Memoirs of a Sportsman" deserved reprobation from an ultra-conservative government. Never, either before or afterward, did the system of serfdom receive a more deadly blow than that dealt by these calm, unimpassioned, but irrefutably-accurate and vivid presentations of the facts in the case.

I. F. H.

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MEMOIRS OF A SPORTSMAN

(1852)

MEMOIRS OF A SPORTSMAN

I

KHOR AND KALÍNITCH

ANY one who has had occasion to pass from the Bolkhóff district to the Zhízdrin district, has, in all probability, been struck by the sharp difference between the races of people in the Governments of Orel[1] and Kalúga. The Orel peasant is small of stature, round-shouldered, surly, gazes askance from beneath his brows, lives in miserable huts of ash lumber, discharges husbandry-service for the lord of the manor, does not occupy himself with trading, eats bad food, and wears plaited slippers of linden bark; the Kalúga peasant, who pays the lord of the manor a quit-rent in lieu of personal husbandry-service, is tall of stature, his gaze is bold and merry, he is clean and white of face, he deals in butter and tar, and wears boots on festival days. An Orel village (we are speaking of the eastern part of the Orel Government) is generally situated in the midst of tilled fields, near a ravine somehow converted into a filthy pond. With

[1] Pronounced: Aryól.—TRANSLATOR.

the exception of a few willow-trees, which are always ready for service, and two or three puny birches, you will not see a tree for a verst round about; cottage clings close to cottage, the roofs are covered with rotten straw. . . . . A Kalúga village, on the contrary, is generally surrounded by a forest; the cottages stand further apart and more upright, and are covered with boards; the gates are fast locked, and the wattled fence round the back yard is not broken down, nor does it bulge outward, inviting a visit from every passing pig. . . . . And things are better for the huntsman, also, in the Kalúga Government. In the Orel Government, the forests and squares [1] will disappear within the next five years, and there is not a sign of a marsh; in the Kalúga Government, on the contrary, the clearings covered with a growth of bushes extend for hundreds, the marshes for scores, of versts,[2] and that noble game-bird the black-cock has not been exterminated, the amiable snipe abounds, and that busybody the partridge gladdens and startles both gunner and dog with its abrupt flight.

While visiting the Zhízdrin district, in the capacity of a sportsman, I met in the fields, and

[1] "Squares," in the Government of Orel, is the designation for vast, flat masses of bushes; the dialect of Orel is distinguished, as a whole, by a multitude of peculiar, sometimes very well-aimed, sometimes decidedly uncouth, words and turns of speech.—AUTHOR.

[2] A verst is two-thirds of a mile.—TRANSLATOR.

struck up an acquaintance with, a petty landed proprietor of Kalúga, Polutýkin, who was passionately fond of hunting and was, consequently, a splendid fellow. He had a few weaknesses, it is true: for example, he was in the habit of offering himself in marriage to all the wealthy marriageable girls in the Government, and when his hand and house were declined, with shattered heart he confided his grief to all his friends and acquaintances, but continued to send sour peaches and other unripe products of his garden to the parents of the marriageable girls; he was fond of repeating the selfsame anecdote over and over again, which, notwithstanding Mr. Polutýkin's reverence for its qualities, absolutely never made a single person laugh; he was in the habit of lauding the writings of Akím Nakhímoff and the novel "Pinna"; he stuttered; he called his dog Astronomer; he said *odnátche* instead of *odnáko* (but), and had set up in his house a French system of cookery, the secret whereof, according to his cook's understanding of the matter, consisted in completely altering the taste of every viand: meat, from the hands of this skilful artist, smacked of fish, fish tasted like mushrooms, macaroni like gunpowder; on the other hand, not a single carrot ever got into the soup, without having assumed the shape of a lozenge or a trapezium. But, with the exception of these few and insignificant failings, Mr.

Polutýkin was, as I have already said, a splendid fellow.

On the first day of my acquaintance with Mr. Polutýkin, he invited me to spend the night with him.

"It is about five versts to my house,"—he added:—"'t is a long way to trudge afoot; let us drop in first at Khor's." (The reader will excuse me if I do not reproduce his stuttering.)

"And who is Khor?"

"Why, a peasant of mine. . . . . He lives not far from here."

We wended our way thither. In the middle of the forest, in a cleared and cultivated glade, Khor's isolated farmstead was erected. It consisted of several edifices of pine logs, connected by fences; in front of the principal cottage stretched a penthouse, supported by slender posts. We entered. We were greeted by a young lad, twenty years of age, tall and handsome.

"Ah, Fédya! Is Khor at home?"—Mr. Polutýkin asked him.

"No. Khor has gone to town,"—replied the young fellow, displaying a row of snow-white teeth. "Is it your order that I harness up the little cart?"

"Yes, brother. And fetch us some kvas."[1]

[1] A sort of small beer, made by pouring water on the crusts of the sour, black, rye bread (or on rye meal) and fermenting it. I leave the friendly, simple "brother" in literal translation, here

We entered the cottage. Not a single Súzdal[1] picture was pasted upon the neat timber walls; in the corner, in front of a heavy, holy picture in a silver setting, burned a shrine-lamp; the linden-wood table had been recently planed off and washed; no lively cockroaches[2] were roaming between the planks and over the frames of the windows, neither were any meditative black beetles concealed there. The young man speedily made his appearance with a large white jug filled with good kvas, a huge hunk of wheaten bread, and a dozen salted cucumbers in a wooden bowl. He placed all these eatables on the table, leaned against the door, and began to gaze at us with a smile. Before we had had time to finish our refreshments, the cart rumbled up in front of the porch. We went out. A boy of fifteen, curly-haired and rosy-cheeked, was sitting in the driver's place, and with difficulty holding in a well-fed piebald stallion. Round about the cart stood six young giants, all of whom bore a strong resemblance both to each other and to Fédya. "All young Polecats!"[3] remarked Polutýkin. "All young Polecats,"—chimed in Fédya, who had followed us out to the porch:

as elsewhere, instead of using "my dear fellow," "my boy," "my lad," or the like.—TRANSLATOR.

[1] A kind of cheap lithograph made in the town named.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] "Prussians," literally.—TRANSLATOR.

[3] Khor', a polecat; Khor'ki, young polecats, or Khor's sons.—TRANSLATOR.

" and this is not all, either: Potáp is in the forest, and Sídor has gone to town with old Khor. . . . See here, Vásya," he went on, addressing the driver:—" go like the wind: thou art driving the master. Only, look out, and slow down at the jolting-places: otherwise thou wilt spoil the cart and disturb the master's belly!" The remaining young Khors grinned at Fédya's sallies.—" Help Astronomer in!" exclaimed Mr. Polutýkin, solemnly. Fédya, not without satisfaction, lifted the dog, which was smiling in a forced way, into the air, and deposited him on the bottom of the cart. Vásya gave the horse his head. We drove off. " That 's my counting-house yonder," said Mr. Polutýkin suddenly to me, pointing at a small, low house:—" would you like to go in?"—" With pleasure."—" It is abolished now," he remarked, as he alighted:—" but it 's worth inspection, all the same."—The office consisted of two empty rooms. The watchman, a crooked old man, ran in from the back yard.—" Good day, Minyáitch," said Mr. Polutýkin: " But where 's the water?"—The crooked old man vanished, and immediately returned with a bottle of water and two glasses. " Try it," said Polutýkin to me: " It 's good spring water." We drank a glass apiece, whereupon the old man made us a reverence to the girdle.—" Well, now, I think we can drive on," remarked my new friend. " In this office I sold to merchant Allelúieff four desya-

tínas[1] of forest, at a good price."—We seated ourselves in the cart, and half an hour later we drove into the yard of the manor-house.

"Tell me, please," I asked Polutýkin at supper:—"why does your Khor live apart from your other peasants?"

"This is why: he 's a clever peasant. Five and twenty years ago, his cottage burned down; so then he came to my late father, and said: 'Permit me, Nikolái Kúzmitch, to settle in your forest, on the marsh. I 'll pay you a good quit-rent there.'—'But why dost thou wish to settle on the marsh?'—'Well, because I do: only, dear little father, Nikolái Kúzmitch, be so good as not to use me for work any more, but impose whatever quit-rent you see fit.'—'Fifty rubles a year!'—'All right.'—'And look out, I won't tolerate any arrears!'—'Of course, there shall be no arrears.' . . . . . And so he settled on the marsh. Since that time, the people have nicknamed him The Polecat (Khor)."

"Well, and has he grown rich?"

"Yes. Now he pays me a hundred rubles quit-rent, and I 'm thinking of raising it again. More than once I have said to him: 'Buy thy freedom! Khor, take my advice, buy thy freedom!' . . . . But he, the beast, assures me that he can't afford to; he has n't any money, he says. . . . But, of course, he has!"

[1] A desyatína is 2.70 acres.—TRANSLATOR.

On the following day, we went off hunting again as soon as we had drunk tea. As we were passing through the village, Mr. Polutýkin ordered the coachman to halt at a low-roofed cottage, and shouted loudly: "Kalínitch!"—"Immediately, master, I 'll be there immediately,"—rang out a voice from the yard:—"I 'm tying on my linden-bark slippers."—We drove at a foot-pace; outside of the village we were overtaken by a man of forty, tall of stature, gaunt, with a small head which was bent backward. This was Kalínitch. His good-natured, swarthy face, pitted here and there with pock-marks, pleased me at the first glance. Kalínitch (as I afterward learned) went hunting with his master every day, carried his game-bag, sometimes his gun also, spied out where the bird alighted, fetched water, picked strawberries, erected huts of shelter, ran behind the drozhky; Mr. Polutýkin could not take a step without him. Kalínitch was a man of the merriest, gentlest possible nature, was incessantly humming to himself, casting care-free glances in all directions, spoke somewhat through his nose, smilingly screwed up his bright-blue eyes, and frequently clasped his thin, wedge-shaped beard in his hand. He walked in a leisurely way, but with huge strides, leaning lightly on a long, slender staff. In the whole course of the day, he never addressed me once, served me without servility, but looked

after his master as he would after a child. When the intolerable sultriness of midday made us seek a shelter, he led us to his bee-farm, in the depths of the forest. Kalínitch threw open to us the tiny cottage, draped with trusses of dry, sweet-smelling grass, made us a bed on the fresh hay, and putting on his head a sort of sack with a net, took a knife, a pot, and a fire-brand, and betook himself to his beehives, to cut out some honey for us. We drank the warm, transparent honey like spring-water, and fell asleep to the monotonous humming of the bees and the chattering rustle of the leaves. A light gust of wind awakened me. . . . . I opened my eyes, and saw Kalínitch: he was sitting on the threshold of the half-open door, and carving a spoon with his knife. For a long time I admired his face, gentle and clear as the sky at eventide. Mr. Polutýkin also awoke. We did not rise at once. It is pleasant, after a long tramp and a deep sleep, to lie motionless on the hay: the body luxuriates and languishes, the face is flushed with a faint heat, sweet languor closes the eyelids. . At last we rose, and went out to roam about until the evening. At supper I began to talk again about Khor and also about Kalínitch.—"Kalínitch is a good peasant,"—said Mr. Polutýkin to me:—"a zealous and obliging peasant; but he cannot keep his domestic affairs in order: I am always taking him away. Every day he goes hunting

with me. . . What sort of farm-management is possible under the circumstances—you can judge for yourself."—I agreed with him, and we went to bed.

On the following day, Mr. Polutýkin was obliged to go to town on business connected with his neighbour Pitchukóff. His neighbour Pitchukóff tilled some of his land, and on the land thus tilled had whipped one of his peasant women. I went hunting alone, and toward evening dropped in at Khor's. On the threshold of the cottage an old man received me,—a bald old man, low of stature, broad-shouldered, and thick-set—the Polecat himself. I gazed with curiosity at this Khor. The cut of his countenance reminded me of Socrates: there was the same lofty, knobby brow, the same small eyes, the same snub nose. We entered the cottage together. The same Fédya brought me milk and black bread. Khor seated himself on the bench, and stroking his curly beard with the utmost composure, entered into conversation with me. He felt his dignity, apparently, and moved and spoke slowly, occasionally smiling beneath his long moustache.

We chatted together about the seed-planting and the harvest, about the life of the peasants. . . . He seemed to agree thoroughly with me; only, afterward, I became ashamed, and felt that I had not been saying the right thing. . . . Somehow, it turned out so strangely. Khor sometimes

expressed himself queerly, out of wariness, it must have been. . . . Here is a sample of our conversation:

"See here, Khor," I said to him: "why dost not thou buy thy freedom from thy master?"

"And why should I buy my freedom? As it is, I know my master, and I know what quit-rent I have to pay. . . . we have a good master."

"But it is better to be free, nevertheless,"—I remarked.

Khor gazed askance at me.

"Of course," said he.

"Well, then, why dost not thou buy thyself free?"

Khor twisted his head around.

"Wherewith wouldst thou have me buy my freedom, dear little father?"

"Come now, enough of that, old man. . . . ."

"If Khor were to become a freeman," he went on in an undertone, as though speaking to himself:—"any one who lives without a beard would be Khor's superior."

"But shave off thy beard."

"What 's the beard? the beard is grass: it can be mown."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, you know, Khor will fall straightway among the merchants; the merchants lead a comfortable life, and they wear beards."

"What then, thou art engaged in trade also, art thou not?"—I asked him.

"We do a little trade in butter and tar. . . . . Dost thou command us to harness up the light cart, dear little father?"

"Thou keepest a tight rein on thy tongue, and art a man who knows his own mind," I thought. "No," I said aloud:—"I don't want the cart; I shall be roaming in the vicinity of thy farm to-morrow, and, with thy permission, I will stop and pass the night in thy hay-barn."

"Pray do. But wilt thou be comfortable in the barn? I will order the women to spread a sheet and place a pillow for thee. Hey there, women!"—he shouted, rising from his seat:—"hither, women! . . . . And do thou go with him, Fédya. For women are a stupid lot.

A quarter of an hour later, Fédya escorted me to the barn with a lantern. I threw myself down on the fragrant hay; my dog curled himself up at my feet; Fédya bade me good night, the door squeaked and slammed. It was a good while before I could get to sleep. A cow came to the door, and breathed hard a couple of times; my dog growled at her with dignity; a pig passed by, grunting meditatively; a horse somewhere near at hand began to chew hay and snort . . . . at last I fell asleep.

At dawn Fédya waked me. That merry, dashing young fellow pleased me greatly; and, so

far as I had been able to observe, he was a favourite with old Khor also. The two bantered each other very amiably. The old man came out to meet me. Whether it was because I had passed the night under his roof, or for some other reason, at all events, Khor treated me much more graciously than on the preceding evening.

"The samovár is ready for thee,"—he said to me, with a smile:—"let us go and drink tea."

We seated ourselves around the table. A robust peasant woman, one of his daughters-in-law, brought a pot of milk. All his sons entered the cottage in turn. "What a tall family thou hast!"—I remarked to the old man.

"Yes," he said, biting off a tiny morsel of sugar:—"they have, apparently, no complaints to make against me or against my old woman."

"And do they all live with thee?"

"Yes. They want to, themselves, so here they live."

"And are all of them married?"

"That one yonder, the scamp, won't marry,"—he replied, pointing at Fédya, who, as before, was leaning against the door.—"Váska is too young, he must wait a while."

"But why should I marry?" retorted Fédya: "I 'm comfortable as I am. What do I want with a wife? For the sake of snarling at each other, pray?"

"Oh, get out! . . . I know thee! thou wearest a silver ring.[1] . . . . . Thou wouldst like to be sniffing around the women among the house-serfs. . . . 'Stop that, you impudent thing!'" went on the old man, imitating the house-maids. "I know thee thoroughly, thou lazy creature!"

"And what is there good about a woman?"

"A woman is a worker,"—remarked Khor, impressively. "A woman is a man's servant."

"But what do I want with a worker?"

"That 's exactly the point, thou art fond of picking up the hot coals by making a catspaw of other people. We know all about fellows of your stamp."

"Well, marry me off, then, if that 's the case. Hey? What dost thou say to that? Why art thou silent?"

"Come, that will do, that will do, jester. Dost thou not see that we are bothering the gentleman. I 'll marry thee off, never fear. . . And be not angry, dear little father: the child is little as yet, seest thou, and has n't succeeded in acquiring sense."

Fédya shook his head. . . . . .

"Is Khor at home?"—resounded a familiar voice outside the door,—and Kalínitch entered the cottage with a bunch of wild strawberries in his hand, which he had plucked for his friend

[1] That is, he was getting foppish and so showing an interest.—TRANSLATOR.

Khor. The old man gave him a cordial greeting. I stared in amazement at Kalínitch: I must confess, that I had not expected such "sentimentality" from a peasant.

On that day, I set out on my hunt four hours later than usual, and spent the three following days with Khor. My new acquaintances interested me. I do not know how I won their confidence, but they talked unreservedly with me. I listened to them and watched them with pleasure. The two friends did not resemble each other in the least. Khor was a decisive, practical man with an administrative head, a rationalist; Kalínitch, on the contrary, belonged to the class of idealists, romanticists, exalted and dreamy people. Khor understood reality, that is to say: he had established himself comfortably, he had amassed a little money, he got along well with his master, and with the other authorities; Kalínitch wore linden-bark slippers, and worried along as best he might. Khor had bred a large family, obedient and harmonious; Kalínitch had had a wife, once upon a time, of whom he had been afraid, and had never had any children at all. Khor saw through Mr. Polutýkin; Kalínitch worshipped his master. Khor loved Kalínitch, and afforded him his protection; Kalínitch loved and respected Khor. Khor talked little, laughed and reasoned to himself; Kalínitch expressed himself with fervour, although he could

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not gabble as fluently[1] as a dashing factory hand. . . . But Kalínitch was endowed with prerogatives which Khor himself recognised; for example: he could conjure blood,[2] fear, madness, and expel worms; he was successful with bees, he had a light hand. Khor, in my presence, requested him to lead a newly bought horse into the stable, and Kalínitch, with conscientious pompousness,[3] complied with the old sceptic's request. Kalínitch stood closer to nature; but Khor to people, to society; Kalínitch did not like to reason, and believed everything blindly; Khor rose even to the ironical point of view on life. He had seen a great deal, he knew a great deal, and I learned much from him. For instance: from his narratives I learned that every summer, before the mowing, a small peasant cart of a peculiar aspect makes its appearances in the villages. In this cart sits a man in a kaftan, and sells scythes. For cash, he charges a ruble and twenty-five kopéks in coin, or a ruble and fifty kopéks in bank-bills; on credit, he asks three paper rubles and a silver ruble. All the peasants buy on credit, of course. Two or three weeks later, he makes his appearance again, and demands his money. The peasant's oats are just reaped, so he has the wherewithal to pay, he goes with the merchant to the dram-shop, and there he discharges

[1] Russian: "Sing like a nightingale."—TRANSLATOR.
[2] Stop the flow, as in nosebleed.—TRANSLATOR.
[3] Because he had "the lucky hand."—TRANSLATOR.

his debt. Some landed proprietors conceived the idea of buying the scythes themselves, for cash, and distributing them, on credit, to the peasants, at the same price; but the peasants proved to be dissatisfied, and even fell into a state of dejection; they had been deprived of the satisfaction of tapping the scythe and listening to the ring of it, of turning it about in their hands, and asking the crafty merchant from the petty burgher class, twenty times in succession: "See here, young fellow, that is n't such a very good scythe, is it?"—The same tricks take place also over the purchase of reaping-hooks, with merely this difference, that in this case the women take a hand in the matter, and sometimes force the pedlar to thrash them, for their own benefit. But the women are the greatest sufferers in any case. The men who contract to supply material for the paper-mills entrust the purchase of rags of a special sort to men who, in some districts, are called "eagles." An "eagle" of this sort receives from the merchant a couple of hundred rubles in bank-bills, and sets forth in quest of booty. But, in contrast to the noble bird from whom he has received his name, he does not swoop down openly and boldly,—quite the reverse: the "eagle" resorts to craft and wiles. He leaves his little cart somewhere or other in the bushes near the village, and sets forth along the back yards and back doors, just as though he

were some passing stranger, or simply a roving vagrant. The women divine his approach by instinct, and steal forth to meet him. The trading compact is completed in haste. For a few copper farthings the peasant woman delivers to the "eagle" not only every useless rag, but frequently her husband's shirt and her own gown. Of late, the women have found it profitable to steal from themselves, and rid themselves in this manner of the hemp, especially of hemp-yarn,—an important extension and improvement of the "eagles'" industry! On the other hand, the peasant men have grown alert, and at the slightest suspicion, at the mere distant rumour, of the appearance of an "eagle," they proceed swiftly and vivaciously to corrective and precautionary measures. And, as a matter of fact, is it not an outrage? Selling the hemp is their business,—and they really do sell it—not in town,—they would have to trudge to the town,—but to travelling dealers, who, for the lack of scales, reckon forty handfuls as a pud,[1]—and you know what sort of a fist and what sort of a palm the Russian man possesses, especially when he "waxes zealous"! Of such tales I, an inexperienced man, and a "resident" in the country (as we say in our government of Orel), heard aplenty. But Khor did not tell stories all the time; he questioned me about many things.

[1] A trifle over thirty-six pounds, English.—TRANSLATOR.

He learned that I had been abroad, and his curiosity was inflamed. . . . Kalínitch kept pace with him; but Kalínitch was more affected by descriptions of nature, of mountains, waterfalls, remarkable buildings, great towns; administrative and governmental questions interested Khor. He inquired into everything in turn:—"Do they have everything yonder just as we have, or is it different? . . Come, tell me, dear little father, how is it? . . . . "Ah! Akh! O Lord, Thy will be done!"—Kalínitch would exclaim in the course of my narrative; Khor maintained silence, contracted his thick eyebrows in a frown, and merely remarked, from time to time, "That would n't suit us, but it 's good—it 's right."—I cannot transmit to you all his queries, and there is no reason that I should; but I carried away from our conversations one conviction, which, in all probability, will be utterly unexpected to my readers,—the conviction that Peter the Great was pre-eminently a Russian man—Russian, to wit, in his reforms. The Russian man is so convinced of his strength and vigour that he is not averse to making a violent effort: he takes little interest in his past, and looks boldly ahead. What is good pleases him, what is sensible he wants to have given to him, and whence it comes is a matter of perfect indifference to him. His healthy mind is fond of jeering at the lean German brain; but the Germans, in Khor's words,

are an interesting little race, and he was ready to learn of them. Thanks to the exclusive nature of his situation, of his practical independence, Khor talked to me about many things which you could n't pry out of any other man with a crowbar,—as the peasants say, grind out with a millstone. He really understood his position. In chatting with Khor, I heard, for the first time, the simple, clever speech of the Russian peasant. His knowledge was tolerably extensive, of its kind, but he did not know how to read; Kalínitch did. "Reading and writing came easy to that blockhead," remarked Khor:—"and his bees have never died when they swarmed."—"But thou hast had thy children taught to read and write?"—Khor remained silent for a while.—"Fédya knows how."—"And the others?"—"The others don't."—"Why not?"—The old man made no reply, and changed the conversation. Moreover, sensible as he was, he had a great many prejudices and bigoted ideas. For example, he despised women from the bottom of his soul, and when he was in merry mood he jeered at and ridiculed them. His wife, aged and waspish, never descended from the oven all day long, and grumbled and scolded incessantly; her sons paid no attention to her, but she kept her daughters-in-law in the fear of God,—under her thumb. Not without reason does the husband's mother sing in Russian ballads: "What

sort of a son art thou to me, what sort of a family man! thou beatest not thy wife, thou beatest not the young woman. . . . . ." I once took it into my head to stand up for the daughters-in-law, I tried to arouse Khor's compassion; but he calmly replied to me, " Why do you bother yourself with such . . . . . trifles,—let the women wrangle; . . . . if they are interfered with 't will be all the worse, and it is n't worth while to soil one's hands." Sometimes the ill-tempered old woman crawled down from the oven, called the watch-dog in from the anteroom, saying: " Come here, come here, doggy! " and beat it on its gaunt back with the oven-fork, or took up her stand under the penthouse and " yowled," as Khor expressed it, at all the passers-by. But she feared her husband, and, at his command, she took herself off to her place on the oven. But the most curious thing of all was to listen to a dispute between Khor and Kalínitch, when Mr. Polutýkin was in question.—" Don't touch him, Khor,"—said Kalínitch.—" But why does n't he have some boots made for thee? " retorted the other.—" Eka, boots! . . . . what do I want of boots? I 'm a serf." . . . . " Well, and here am I a serf too, but see here—" . . . . At this word, Khor elevated his leg, and showed Kalínitch his boot, carved, probably, out of mammoth hide.—" Ekh, but art thou one of us? " replied Kalínitch.—" Well, he might, at least, give thee some

bark slippers: for thou goest a-hunting with him; thou must wear out a pair a day, I should think." —"He does give me money for slippers."— "Yes, and last year he presented thee with a ten-kopék piece."—Kalínitch turned away in vexation, but Khor burst out laughing, whereat his little eyes completely disappeared.

Kalínitch sang quite agreeably, and played on the *balaláika*.[1] Khor would listen and listen to him, then suddenly loll his head on one side, and begin to chime in, in a mournful voice. He was especially fond of the song: "Oh, thou my Fate, my Fate!" Fédya omitted no opportunity to banter his father. "What has moved thee to pity, old man?" But Khor propped his cheek on his hand, shut his eyes, and continued to bewail his fate. . . . . On the other hand, there was no more active man than he at any other time; he was eternally busy about something or other —mending a cart, propping up the fence, looking over the harness. He did not, however, affect any special degree of cleanliness, and in reply to my comments he once said that "the cottage must smell as though it were inhabited."

"But just see,"—I retorted:—"how clean everything is at Kalínitch's bee-farm."

"The bees would n't live otherwise,"—he said with a sigh.

"And hast thou a hereditary estate of thine

[1] A triangular, three-stringed guitar.—TRANSLATOR.

own?"—he asked me on another occasion.—"Yes."—"Is it far from here?"—"About a hundred versts."—"And dost thou live on thy estate, dear little father?"—"Yes, I do."—"And thou amusest thyself chiefly with thy gun, I suppose?"—"I must confess that I do."—"And a good thing it is, too, dear little father; shoot as many black-cock as thou wilt, and change thy steward as often as possible."

On the fourth day, at evening, Mr. Polutýkin sent for me. I was sorry to part from the old man. In company with Kalínitch, I seated myself in the cart. "Well, good-bye, Khor; may health be thine!" I said. . . . . "Good-bye, Fédya."—"Good-bye, dear little father, good-bye; don't forget us." We drove off; the sunset had just begun to blaze out.—"The weather will be splendid to-morrow," I said, glancing at the clear sky.—"No, there will be rain,"—Kalínitch replied:—"the ducks yonder are splashing, and the grass smells awfully strong."—We drove among the bushes. Kalínitch began to sing in a low tone, as he bounced about on the driver's seat, and kept staring, staring at the sunset glow. . . . .

On the following day, I quitted Mr. Polutýkin's hospitable roof.

II

ERMOLÁI AND THE MILLER'S WIFE

In the evening, Ermolái and I set off to the "stand-shooting." . . . . But, possibly, not all my readers know what that is. Listen then, gentlemen.

A quarter of an hour before sunset, in spring, you enter the woods with your gun, and without your dog. You search out for yourself a spot somewhere close to the border of the woods, scan your surroundings, look to your percussion-cap, exchange winks with your companion. A quarter of an hour has elapsed. The sun has set, but it is still light in the forest; the air is pure and limpid; the birds are chirping volubly; the young grass gleams with the gay shimmer of an emerald . . . you wait. The interior of the forest gradually grows dark; the scarlet light of the evening sky glides slowly along the roots and boles of the trees, rises ever higher and higher, passes from the lower, almost bare boughs, to the motionless crests of the trees, which are falling asleep. . . . And lo, now the crests also have grown dim; the crimson heaven turns blue. The odour of the forest is intensified, a warm moisture

is lightly wafted abroad; the fleeting breeze dies away around you. The birds sink to sleep—not all at once—but according to their species: now the chaffinches have fallen silent, in a few moments the hedge-sparrows will do the same, and after them the greenfinches. In the forest, everything grows darker and darker. The trees flow together in huge, blackish masses; the first tiny stars peer out timidly in the blue sky. All the birds are asleep. The redtails, the little woodpeckers, alone are still chirping sleepily. . . . And now they, also, have grown silent. Once more the resonant voice of the pewit has rung out overhead; an oriole has uttered a mournful cry somewhere or other; the nightingale has trilled for the first time. Your heart is languishing with anticipation, and all of a sudden—but only sportsmen will understand me—all of a sudden, athwart the profound silence, a peculiar sort of croaking and hissing rings out, the measured sweep of rapid wings becomes audible,—and a woodcock, his long beak handsomely bent on one side, flies swimmingly from behind a dark birch-tree to meet your shot.

That is what " stand-shooting " means.

So, as I was saying, Ermolái and I set out for the stand-shooting; but pardon me, gentlemen; I must first make you acquainted with Ermolái.

Picture to yourselves a man five and forty years of age, tall, gaunt, with a long, thin nose,

a narrow forehead, small grey eyes, dishevelled hair, and broad, mocking lips. This man went about, winter and summer, in a yellowish nankeen kaftan, of German cut, but girt with a belt; he wore blue, full trousers, and a cap with a lamb-skin border, presented to him by a ruined landed proprietor in a merry mood. To his girdle were attached two bags, one in front, artfully twisted into two halves, for powder and shot,—the other behind, for game; but the wads Ermolái procured from his own, seemingly inexhaustible, cap. He might easily have bought himself a cartridge-box and a game-bag out of the money paid to him for the game he sold, but he never once even so much as thought of such a purchase, and continued to load his gun as before, exciting the amazement of spectators by the art wherewith he avoided the danger of spilling or mixing the powder and shot. His gun was single-barrelled, with a flint lock, addicted, moreover, to the bad habit of "kicking" viciously, the result of which was, that Ermolái's right cheek was always plumper than the left. How he could hit anything with that gun was more than even a clever man could divine; but hit he did. He had a setter dog, Valétka,[1] a very remarkable creature. Ermolái never fed him. "As if I were going to feed a dog,"—he argued:—"moreover, a dog is a clever animal, it will

[1] Little knave or valet; also, knave at cards.—TRANSLATOR.

find food for itself." And, in fact, although Valétka astonished even the indifferent passer-by with his emaciation, still he lived, and lived long; and even, in spite of his wretched condition, he never once got lost, nor exhibited a desire to abandon his master. Once upon a time, during his youthful years, he absented himself for a couple of days, led astray by love; but that folly speedily broke away from him. Valétka's most remarkable quality was his incomprehensible indifference to everything on earth. . . . . If I were not speaking of a dog, I would use the word disenchantment. He generally sat with his bob-tail tucked up under him, scowled, shivered, now and then, and never smiled. (Everyone knows that dogs have the power of smiling, and even of smiling very prettily.) He was extremely ill-favoured, and not a single idle house-serf omitted an opportunity to jeer spitefully at his appearance; but Valétka endured all these jeers and even blows with remarkable coolness. He afforded particular satisfaction to the cooks, who immediately tore themselves from their work, and set out in pursuit of him with hue and cry, when he, in consequence of a weakness not confined to dogs alone, thrust his hungry snout through the half-open door of the seductively warm and sweet-smelling kitchen. On a hunt, he distinguished himself by indefatigability, and he had a very respectable scent; but if

he accidentally overtook a wounded hare, he promptly devoured every bit of him, to the very last little bone, with great gusto, somewhere in the cool shade, at a respectful distance from Ermolái, who swore in all known and unknown dialects.

Ermolái belonged to one of my neighbours, a country squire of the ancient sort. These old-fashioned landed proprietors do not like "snipe," and stick to domestic fowls. It is only on exceptional occasions—on birth-days, saints' days, and election days [1]—that the cooks of squires of the ancient cut undertake to prepare the long-billed birds, and, waxing furious, as a Russian is wont to do when he himself does not quite understand what he is about, they invent for them such complicated sauces, that most of the guests survey with curiosity and attention the viands placed before them, but cannot possibly bring themselves to taste them. Ermolái had orders to furnish his master's table, once a month, with a couple of brace of black-cock and partridges, and, for the rest, was permitted to live where and how he pleased. He was discarded, as a man who was fit for no work whatsoever,—"a ne'er do well," as we say in the Government of Orel. They did not furnish him with powder and shot, as a matter of course, in consonance with the self-same principle on which he did not feed his dog.

[1] For Marshal of the Nobility.—TRANSLATOR.

Ermolái was a man of a very singular nature; care-free as a bird, decidedly loquacious, absent-minded, and clumsy in appearance; he was extremely fond of drink, never lived long in one place, shuffled his feet as he walked, and swayed from side to side,—and with all his shuffling and swaying to and fro, he would cover a distance of fifty versts in twenty-four hours. He exposed himself to the most varied experiences; he would pass the night in the marshes, in trees, on roofs, under bridges, more than once he sat locked up in garrets, cellars, and barns, lost his gun, his dog, his most indispensable garments, was thrashed long and violently,—and, notwithstanding, after a while, he would return home clothed, with his gun and his dog. It was impossible to call him a jolly man, although he was almost always in a fairly cheerful mood; his general aspect was that of a droll fellow. Ermolái was fond of chatting with a nice man, especially over a glass of liquor, but even that not for long at a time; he would rise and walk off.—"But where the devil art thou going? Night is falling."—"Why, to Tcháplino."—"But what hast thou got to trudge to Tcháplino for—ten versts away?"—"Why, to spend the night there with peasant Sofrón."—"Come, spend the night here."—"No, I can't."—And off would go Ermolái, with his Valétka, into the dark night, through the bushes and the ravines, and, as likely as not, the poor peasant

Sofrón would not let him into the house, and, in all probability, would pummel his back for him to boot: "Don't go bothering honest folks." On the other hand, there was no one who could be compared with Ermolái in the art of catching fish at flood-water in spring, of getting crawfish with his hands, of searching out game by instinct, of decoying woodcock, of training hawks, of enticing nightingales with the "forest pipes," with "cuckoo call."[1] . . . . One thing he could not do: train dogs; he had not the patience. He had a wife. He went to see her once a week. She dwelt in a miserable, half-ruined little hut, scraped along somehow or other, and often did not know at night whether she would have enough to eat on the morrow or not, and, in general, her lot was a bitter one. Ermolái, that carefree, good-natured man, treated her harshly and roughly, assuming at home a threatening and surly aspect,—and his poor wife did not know how to please him, trembled at his glance, bought him liquor with her last farthing, and servilely covered him with her sheepskin coat when he, stretching himself out majestically on the oven, fell into a heroic slumber. More than once I had occasion to observe in him the involuntary manifestations of a certain surly ferocity. I did not like the expression of his face when

[1] Hunters for nightingales are familiar with these terms: they designate the best "passages" in the nightingale's song.—AUTHOR.

he bit the neck of a wounded bird. But Ermolái never remained at home for more than one day; and, away from home, he was again transformed into "Ermólka," as he was called for a hundred versts round about, and as he occasionally called himself.[1] The meanest house-serf was conscious of his superiority over this vagabond,—and, possibly for that very reason, treated him in a friendly manner; while the peasants first gladly pursued and caught him, like a hare in the field, but afterward released him and bade him God-speed, and having once recognised the fact that he was a queer fish, they did not touch him again, but even gave him bread, and entered into conversation with him. . . . . This was the man whom I took with me as a hunter, and with him I set out for "stand-shooting" in a large birch grove on the bank of the Ísta.

Many Russian rivers have one hilly shore and the other in level plains, like the Volga; so has the Ísta. This little river winds about in an extremely capricious way, writhing like a snake, never flows straight for a single half-verst, and, in some places, from the crest of a steep hill, about ten versts of it are visible, with dams and ponds, mills, vegetable-plots enclosed with willows, and dense gardens. The Ísta abounds in fish, especially in mullet (the peasants catch

[1] The diminutive form conveys the idea of an amiable, good fellow. Ermólka may also mean the skull-cap.—TRANSLATOR.

them, with their hands, in the heat of the day, under the bushes). Small sandpipers fly whistling along the rocky shores, dotted with cold, bright springs; wild ducks swim out into the centre of the ponds, and gaze cautiously about; herons stand out prominently in the shadow, in the bays, under the precipices. . . . . We had been standing at " stand-shooting " for about an hour, and had killed a couple of brace of woodcock; and, being desirous of trying our luck once more before sunrise (one can also go stand-shooting early in the morning), we decided to pass the night in the nearest mill. We emerged from the grove, and descended the hill. The river was flowing on in dark-blue waves; the air had grown thick, burdened with the nocturnal moisture. We knocked at the gate. The dogs began to bark in the yard. " Who 's there? "—rang out a hoarse, sleepy voice.—" Sportsmen: let us in to pass the night."—There was no answer.—" We will pay."—" I 'll go and tell the master. . . Shut up, you damned beasts! . . . . Ekh, I 'd like to murder you! "—We heard the labourer enter the cottage; he speedily returned to the gate.—" No," he said, " the master does not command me to admit you."—" Why not? "—" Why, he 's afraid: you are hunters; the first thing anybody knows, you 'll be setting the mill afire; you see, you have that sort of ammunition."—" What nonsense! "—" Anyhow, our mill was

burned down the year before last: some cattle-drovers spent the night here, and, you know, probably they set it ablaze."—" But, brother, we can't spend the night out of doors, of course!"—" As you please." . . . . He went off, clumping with his boots.

Ermolái wished him divers unpleasant things. " Let 's go to the village,"—he ejaculated, at last, with a sigh. But it was two versts to the village. . . . " Let 's pass the night here,"—said I:—" it is warm out of doors; the miller will send us out some straw, if we pay for it." —Ermolái agreed, without making any difficulties.—Again we began to thump on the gate.—" What do you want now? "—rang out the voice of the hired man again:—" I told you, you could n't."—We explained to him what we wanted. He went to consult his master, and came back accompanied by the latter. The wicket screeched. The miller made his appearance, a man of lofty stature, with a fat face, a bull neck, and a huge, round belly. He assented to my proposal. A hundred paces from the mill there was a tiny shed, open on all sides. Thither they brought us straw and hay; the workman placed the samovár on the grass beside the stream, and squatting down on his heels, began zealously to blow into the pipe. . . . . The coals flared up brilliantly, illuminating his youthful face. The miller ran to arouse his wife, and, at

last, himself suggested to me that we should spend the night in his cottage; but I preferred to remain in the open air. The miller's wife brought us milk, eggs, potatoes, and bread. The samovár soon began to hiss, and we set to drinking tea. Vapours rose from the river; there was no wind; the corncrakes were calling all around us; faint noises resounded near the mill-wheels: now the drops dripped from the blades, again the water trickled through the bars of the sluice-gate. We built a small bonfire. While Ermolái was roasting the potatoes in the ashes, I managed to fall into a doze. . . . . A faint, repressed whispering aroused me. I raised my head: before the fire, on an overturned cask, sat the miller's wife, chatting with my huntsman. I had already, from her garb, her movements, and her mode of speech, divined that she was of the house-serf class—not a peasant woman, and not a petty burgheress; but only now did I scan her face well. Apparently, she was about thirty years of age; her thin, pale face still preserved traces of remarkable beauty; I was particularly pleased by her eyes, which were large and mournful. She had her elbows propped on her knees, and her face rested on her hands. Ermolái was sitting with his back toward me, and feeding the fire with chips.

"There 's murrain in Zheltúkhino again,"—said the miller's wife:—"both of Father Iván's

cows are down with it. . . . . Lord have mercy!"

"And how are your pigs?"—inquired Ermolái, after a pause.

"They 're alive."

"You might, at least, give me a sucking-pig."

The miller's wife remained silent for a while, then sighed.

"Who 's this you 're with?"—she asked.

"With a gentleman—the gentleman from Kostomárovsk."

Ermolái flung several fir-branches on the fire; the branches immediately began to crackle vigorously, the thick, white smoke puffed out straight in his face.

"Why would n't your husband let us into the cottage?"

"He 's afraid."

"What a fat-belly! . . . . My dear little dove, Arína Timofyéevna, do thou fetch me out a little glass of liquor!"

The miller's wife rose, and disappeared into the gloom. Ermolái began to sing in an undertone:

"When to my loved one I did go,
All my boots I quite wore out."

Arína returned with a small caraffe and a glass. Ermolái half rose to his feet, crossed him-

self, and tossed off a glassful at a gulp. "I love it!" he added.

Again the miller's wife seated herself on the cask.

"Well, how goes it, Arína Timofyéevna,—thou art still ailing, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am."

"What 's the matter?"

"My cough torments me at night."

"The gentleman has fallen asleep, apparently,"—said Ermolái, after a brief silence.—"Don't go to the doctor, Arína: 't will be the worse for thee."

"I 'm not going, as it is."

"But do thou come and stay with me."

Arína bowed her head.

"I 'll drive my own wife away, in that case,"—went on Ermolái. . . "I really will, ma'am."

"You 'd better wake up your master, Ermolái Petróvitch; the potatoes are roasted enough, you see."

"Why, let him go on with his nap,"—remarked my faithful servant, indifferently,—"he has run his legs off, so he is sleepy."

I turned over on the hay. Ermolái rose, and came over to me.—"The potatoes are ready, sir, please eat."

I emerged from beneath the shed-roof; the miller's wife rose from the cask, and started to go away. I entered into conversation with her.

"Is it long since you took over this mill?"

"Our second year began on Trinity-day."[1]

"Where does thy husband come from?"

Arína did not understand my question.

"Whence comes thy husband?"[2]—repeated Ermolái, raising his voice.

"From Byelyóff. He is a burgher of Byelyóff."

"And art thou also from Byelyóff?"

"No, I 'm a serf. . . . I was a serf."

"Whose?"

"Mr. Zvyérkoff's. Now I 'm a free woman."

"Of what Zvyérkoff?"

"Alexander Sílitch."

"Wert not thou his wife's maid?"

"And how do you know that?—Yes, I was."

I gazed at Arína with redoubled curiosity and sympathy.

"I know thy master,"—I went on.

"Do you?"—she replied, in a low voice,—and dropped her eyes.

I must tell the reader why I gazed upon Arína with so much sympathy. During my sojourn in Petersburg, I had accidentally made the acquaintance of Mr. Zvyérkoff.[3] He occupied a

[1] In the Eastern Church this is Whitsunday, or Pentecost. The following day, which is an equally great feast, is "the Day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit." But the grand Pentecost celebration is on Trinity-day.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] The gentleman says, correctly, "otkúda" (whence); Ermolái says, incorrectly, "otkéleva."—TRANSLATOR.

[3] Zvyérkoff is derived from *Zvyer*, a wild beast.—TRANSLATOR.

rather important post, and bore the reputation of being a clever and active man. He had a wife, plump, sensitive, tearful, and ill-tempered, a heavy, commonplace creature; he had also a son, a regular little squire's son of the old-fashioned type, spoiled and stupid. Mr. Zvyérkoff's personal appearance did not predispose one much in his favour: tiny, mouse-like eyes gazed craftily out of a broad, almost square face, a large, sharp-pointed nose, with flaring nostrils, projected from it; closely-clipped grey hair reared itself in a brush above a furrowed brow, thin lips twitched and smiled incessantly. Mr. Zvyérkoff generally stood with his legs straddled far apart, and his thick little hands thrust into his pockets. It once fell to my lot to drive out of town in the same carriage with him. We fell into conversation. Being an experienced, energetic man, Mr. Zvyérkoff began to instruct me in the "way of truth."

"Permit me to remark to you,"—he squeaked, at last:—"all you young men reason and talk about everything at random: you know very little about your own fatherland; Russia is an unknown country to you, gentlemen,—that 's what it is! . . . . You never read anything but German books. Here, for example, you are telling me this, that, and the other, about . . . well, that is to say, about house-serfs. . . . Very good, I don't deny it, that 's all very good; but you don't

know them, you don't know what sort of folks they are." Mr. Zvyérkoff blew his nose loudly, and took a pinch of snuff. "Allow me to relate to you, as an example, one little anecdote: you may find it interesting." (Mr. Zvyérkoff cleared his throat). "You know, I suppose, what sort of a wife I have: apparently, it would be difficult to find a kinder woman than she, you must agree to that. Her maids never have any hardships—their life is simply paradise visibly realised. . . . . But my wife has laid it down as a rule for herself: not to keep married maids. Really, it 's not the thing to do: children will arrive,—and this, and that,—well, and how is a maid to look after her mistress then, as she should, and attend to her ways: she no longer cares for that, she 's no longer thinking of that. One must reason humanely. So, sir, we were once driving through our village, it must be—I want to tell you accurately, not to lie—fifteen years ago. We saw that the Elder had a little girl, a daughter, a very pretty creature; there was even, you know, something obsequious about her manners. My wife says to me: 'Kokò,'—that is to say, you understand, that 's what she calls me,—'let 's take this young girl to Petersburg; she pleases me, Kokò.' . . . 'We 'll take her, with pleasure,' says I. The Elder, of course, fell at our feet; he could not have expected such luck, you understand. . . . . Well, of course,

the girl wept, out of folly. Now, it really is rather painful, at first: the parental house . . . . in general . . . . it 's not in the least surprising. But she soon got used to us; at first we put her in the maids' room; they taught her, of course. And what do you think? . . . . The girl made astonishing progress; my wife simply took a violent fancy to her, and at last appointed her as her personal maid, over the head of the other maids . . . . . observe! . . . And I must do her the justice to say, that my wife had never before had such a maid,—positively, never; obliging, modest, obedient—simply, everything that is required. On the other hand, I must admit that my wife petted her too much: she dressed her capitally, fed her from our own table,[1] gave her tea to drink . . . . well, and every sort of thing you can imagine! So, after this fashion, she served my wife for ten years. All of a sudden, one fine morning, just fancy, Arína comes in—her name was Arína—comes into my study, without being announced,—and, flop! she goes at my feet. . . . I will tell you frankly, that I cannot endure that sort of thing. A man should never forget his dignity, is n't that so? "—' What dost thou want? '—' Dear little father, Alexander Sílitch, I crave a favour.'—' What is it? '—' Permit me to marry.'—I must confess to you

[1] Russian servants always used to have, and generally have still, their own cook and special food, such as cabbage soup, buckwheat groats, and sour, black rye bread.—Translator.

that I was amazed.—'But dost not thou know, fool, that thy mistress has no other maid?'—'I will serve the mistress as usual.'—'Nonsense! Nonsense! thy mistress does not keep married maids.'—'Malánya can take my place.'—'I beg that thou wilt not argue!'—'As you will.'.....
I must admit, that I was dumfounded. I tell you this is the sort of man I am: nothing so offends me, I venture to assert, so violently offends me, as ingratitude. . . . . For there is no need of my telling you—you know what sort of a wife I have: an angel in the flesh, kindness inexpressible. . . . . It seems as though even a malefactor would have pity on her. I ordered Arína out of the room. Perhaps she 'll recover her senses, I thought; one does n't wish, you know, to believe evil, black ingratitude in a person. But what do you think? Six months later, she is good enough to apply to me again, with the same request. Then I drove her away in wrath, I admit it, and threatened her, promised to tell my wife. I was upset. . . . . But conceive my surprise: a little while later, my wife comes to me, in tears, so agitated that I was fairly frightened.—'What has happened?'—'Arína . . . . . You understand. . . . I am ashamed to speak out.'—'It cannot be! . . . . who is it?'—'Petrúshka, the footman.' I flew into a rage. That 's the kind of man I am . . . . don't like half-measures! . . . . . Petrúshka . . . . is not to

blame. We can punish him; but, in my opinion, he is not to blame. Arína . . . . well, what is there . . . . well, well, what more is there to be said?' Of course, I immediately gave orders to have her hair cut off short, to clothe her in striped ticking, and to exile her to the country. My wife was deprived of an excellent maid, but there was no help for it: one cannot tolerate disorder in the household. It is better to amputate an ailing member at one blow. . . . . Well, well, and now, judge for yourself,—well, now, you know what my wife is, you see, you see, she 's, she 's, she 's . . . . an angel, in short! . . . . She had got attached to Arína, you see,—and Arína knew it, and was not ashamed. . . . . Hey? No, tell me . . . hey? But what 's the use of discussing it! In any case, there was nothing else to be done. And that girl's ingratitude pained me, me myself, for a long time. Say what you will . . . . . you need not look for heart, for feeling in those creatures! You may feed a wolf as you will, he always has his eye on the forest. . . . . Forward march, science! But I merely wished to prove to you . . . . ."

And, without finishing his sentence, Mr. Zvyérkoff turned away his head, and wrapped himself more closely in his cloak, manfully stifling his involuntary emotion.

The reader now understands, probably, why I gazed at Arína with sympathy.

"Hast thou been married long to the miller?"—I asked her, at last.

"Two years."

"But is it possible that thy master permitted it?"

"My freedom was purchased."

"By whom?"

"Savély Alexyéevitch."

"Who is he?"

"My husband." (Ermolái smiled to himself.) "But did my master talk to you about me?"—added Arína, after a brief silence.

I did not know what reply to make to her question. "Arína!" shouted the miller from afar. She rose and went away.

"Is her husband a good man?"—I asked Ermolái.

"So-so."

"And have they any children?"

"They had one, but it died."

"How did it come about—did the miller take a liking to her? Did he pay a large ransom for her?"

"I don't know. She knows how to read and write; in his business it . . . . . that sort of thing . . . . is an advantage. Consequently, he must have taken a fancy to her."

"And hast thou known her long?"

"Yes. I used to go to her master's formerly. Their manor is not far from here."

"And dost thou know Petrúshka the footman?"

"Piótr Vasílievitch? Of course I know him."

"Where is he now?"

"He has become a soldier."

We fell silent.

"She appears to be ill?"—I asked Ermolái, at last.

"Ill? I should say so! . . . . I think the stand-shooting will be good to-morrow. It would n't be a bad thing for you to get some sleep now."

A flock of wild ducks dashed whistling over our heads, and we heard them drop down on the river, not far from us. It was completely dark now, and beginning to grow cold; a nightingale was trilling loudly in the grove. We buried ourselves in the hay, and went to sleep.

III

THE RASPBERRY WATER

THE heat often becomes unbearable at the beginning of August. At that time, between twelve and three o'clock, the most resolute and concentrated man is in no condition to go hunting, and the most devoted dog begins "to clean the sportsman's spurs," that is to say, trots behind him at a foot-pace, with his eyes painfully screwed up, and his tongue lolling out in an exaggerated manner; and, in reply to his master's reproaches, he meekly wags his tail, and expresses confusion on his countenance, but does not advance. Precisely on such a day I chanced to be out on a hunt. For a long time, I resisted the temptation to lie down somewhere in the shade, if only for a moment; for a long time, my indefatigable dog continued to rummage among the bushes, although, evidently, he did not expect any rational result from his feverish activity. At last, the stifling sultriness compelled me to think of saving my last strength and faculties. I managed to drag myself to the little river Ísta, already familiar to my indulgent readers, lowered myself from a crag, and strolled along the damp,

yellow sand in the direction of a spring known throughout the whole neighbourhood as "The Raspberry Water." This spring wells forth from a crevice in the bank, which gradually is converted into a small but deep ravine, and twenty paces thence it falls into the river with a merry, babbling sound. Oak bushes have overgrown the slopes of the ravine; around the spring, soft, velvety grass gleams green; the sun's rays hardly ever touch its cold, silvery waters. I reached the spring; on the grass lay a birch-bark dipper, left behind by some passing peasant for public use. I took a drink, lay down in the shade, and cast a glance around me. At the bay formed by the spring's entrance into the river, and for that reason always covered with a faint ripple, sat two old men, with their backs toward me. One of them, rather thickset and lofty of stature, in a neat, dark-green kaftan and a flat felt cap, was catching fish,—the other, a thin, small man in a patched seersucker short coat, and without a cap, was holding the pot of worms on his lap, and now and then passing his hand over his small grey head, as though desirous of protecting it from the sun. I looked more intently at him, and recognised in him Styópushka from Shumíkhino. I beg the reader's permission to introduce this man to him.

A few versts distant from my hamlet, lies the large village Shumíkhino, with a stone church,

erected in the name of Saints Kozmá and Damián. Opposite this church, a spacious manor-house of a landed proprietor formerly flaunted itself, surrounded by various outbuildings,—offices, work-shops, bath-houses, and temporary kitchens, detached wings for visitors and stewards, hot-houses for flowers, swings for the retainers, and other more or less useful structures.

In this mansion dwelt wealthy landed gentry, and everything was proceeding in an orderly manner with them,—when, all of a sudden, one fine morning, this whole blessed establishment [1] was burned to the ground. The gentry removed to another nest; the farm sank into a state of desolation. The vast heap of ashes where the manor had stood was converted into a vegetable-garden, encumbered here and there by piles of bricks, the remnants of the former foundations. A tiny hut had hastily been constructed from the surviving beams, covered with barge-planks,[2] which had been purchased ten years previously for the erection of a pavilion in the Gothic style; and the gardener, Mitrofán, with his wife, Aksínya, and their seven children were established therein. Mitrofán received orders to supply the master's table, one hundred and fifty versts dis-

[1] In the original, *blagodát,* blessing.—Translator.

[2] The barges used on Russian rivers to transport firewood and so forth are riveted together with huge wooden pegs only, and are broken up at the end of the voyage. The lavishly perforated planks sell for a very low price.—Translator.

tant, with fresh herbs and vegetables; to Aksínya was entrusted the oversight of the Tyrolean cow, which had been purchased at a high price in Moscow, but was unfortunately deprived of all possibility of reproduction, and, consequently, had never given any milk since she had been acquired; into her hands was given also a crested, smoke-coloured drake, the "quality's" sole fowl; no duties were assigned to the children, on account of their tender age, which, nevertheless, did not, in the least, prevent their becoming thoroughly lazy. I chanced to pass the night, on a couple of occasions, with this gardener,—I was in the habit of getting cucumbers from him in passing, which cucumbers, heaven knows why, were characterised even in summer by their size, their worthless, watery flavour, and their thick, yellow skin. It was at his house that I had seen Styópushka for the first time. With the exception of Mitrofán and his family, and of the deaf, old churchwarden, Gerásim, who lived as a charity in a tiny chamber at the house of the one-eyed soldier's widow, not a single house-serf remained in Shumíkhino, for it was not possible to regard Styópushka, whom I intend to introduce to the reader, either as a man in general, or as a house-serf in particular.

Every individual has at least some sort of position in society, some connection or other; every house-serf receives, if not wages, at least the so-

called "allowance": Styópushka received absolutely no aid, was related to no one, no one knew of his existence. This man had not even a past; no one mentioned him; it is hardly probable that he was even included in the revision-lists.[1] Obscure rumours were in circulation, to the effect that, once upon a time, he had been valet to some one; but who he was, whence he came, whose son he was, how he had got into the number of the Shumíkhino subjects, in what manner he had acquired the seersucker kaftan which he had worn from time immemorial, where he lived, what he lived on,—as to these points positively no one had the slightest idea, and, to tell the truth, no one bothered himself about these questions. Grandpa Trofímitch, who knew the genealogy of all the house-serfs in an ascending line back to the fourth generation, once said merely, that Stepán was related to a Turkish woman, whom the late master, Brigadier[2] Alexyéi Románitch, had been pleased to bring back with him from a campaign, in his baggage-train. And it even happened that, on festival days, days of universal gifts and hospitable entertainment, with buckwheat patties and green wine, after the ancient Russian custom,—even on such days,

[1] The revised lists of male serfs, made at intervals of years, in the pre-emancipation days, as a basis of taxation.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] A military rank between Colonel and Lieutenant-General, instituted by Peter the Great, and abolished under Paul I.—TRANSLATOR.

Styópushka was not wont to present himself at the tables set forth or at the casks of liquor, did not make his reverence, did not kiss the master's hand, did not drain off at a draught a glass under the master's eye and to the master's health, a glass filled by the fat hand of the superintendent,—perchance, some kind soul, in passing, would bestow upon the poor fellow the bit of patty which he had not been able to finish off. At Easter, people exchanged the kiss of greeting with him, but he did not tuck up his greasy sleeve, he did not pull a red egg out of his rear pocket, he did not present it, panting and blinking, to the young master, or even to the gentlewoman, the mistress herself. In summer, he lived in a pen behind the chicken-coop, and in winter, in the anteroom of the bath-house; in extremely cold weather he spent the night in the hay-loft. People got used to seeing him about, they even gave him a kick sometimes, but no one entered into conversation with him, and he himself, apparently, had never opened his mouth since he was born. After the conflagration, this forsaken man took refuge with the gardener, Mitrofán. The gardener let him alone, he did not say to him, " Live with me," but he did not turn him out of doors. And Styópushka did not live with the gardener: he lodged in, he hovered about, the vegetable-garden. He walked and moved without making a sound; he sneezed and coughed

into his hand, not without terror; he was eternally bustling about and making himself busy, like an ant; and all for his food, for his food alone. And, as a matter of fact, had he not worried about his nourishment from morning until night, —my Styópushka would have died of hunger. 'T is a bad thing not to know in the morning what you will have had to eat by nightfall! Now, Styópushka would be sitting under the hedge, gnawing at a radish, or sucking at a carrot, or crushing a dirty head of cabbage beneath him; again, he would be carrying a bucket of water somewhere or other, and grunting over it; and again, he would light a tiny fire under a pot, and fling some black morsels, drawn from the breast of his shirt, into the pot; or he would be pounding away at his own place in the store-room with a billet of wood, driving in a nail, or putting up a small shelf for his bread. And all this he did in silence, as though from around a corner: cast a glance, and he had already vanished. And then, all of a sudden, he would absent himself for a couple of days; of course, no one noticed his absence. . . . . And the first you knew, there he was again, somewhere near the hedge, placing chips stealthily under the tripod. His face was small, his eyes were yellowish, his hair grew clear down to his eyebrows, he had a small, pointed nose, very large ears, transparent like those of a bat, a beard which looked as apparently of a fort-

night's growth, never any more of it, never any less. This was the Styópushka whom I encountered on the bank of the Ísta, in the company of another old man.

I went up to him, bade him good morning, and seated myself by his side. In Styópushka's companion I recognised another acquaintance: he was a man who had belonged to Count Piótr Ílitch * * *, and had been set at liberty by him, Mikhaílo Savélitch, nicknamed The Fog (Tumán). He lived with the consumptive petty burgher of Bolkhóff who kept the posting-house, where I stopped quite frequently. The young officials and other persons of leisure who traverse the Orel highway (the merchants, laden with their striped feather-beds,[1] care not for it) can still see, at a short distance from the big, church-village of Tróitzkoe (Trinity), a huge, wooden, two-storied house utterly deserted, with roof falling to ruin, and windows tightly nailed up, which stands on the very verge of the road. At midday, in clear, sunny weather, nothing more melancholy can be imagined than this ruin. Here once dwelt Count Piótr Ílitch, famous for his hospitality, a wealthy grandee of the olden days. All the government used to assemble at his house, and dance and amuse themselves gloriously, to the deafening thunder of a home-trained orches-

[1] Even now, in some parts of Russia, mattresses, sheets, and towels must be carried by the traveller; and down-pillows, also, are very generally carried.—Translator.

tra, the crash of rockets and Roman candles; and, in all probability, more than one old woman, who now passes the deserted mansion of the gentry, sighs and recalls the days gone by, and her vanished youth. Long did the Count hold wassail, long did he stroll about, with a courteous smile, among the throng of his obsequious guests; but, unhappily, his estate did not hold out to the end of his life. Completely ruined, he betook himself to Petersburg, sought a place in the service, and died in a hotel chamber, before he had received an answer. The Fog had served as his butler, and had received his emancipation papers during the Count's lifetime. He was a man of sixty, with a regular and agreeable countenance. He smiled almost constantly, as only people of Katherine the Second's time do smile nowadays, good-naturedly and majestically; when he talked, he slowly thrust forward and compressed his lips, caressingly screwed up his eyes, and uttered his words somewhat through his nose. He blew his nose and took snuff in a leisurely way also, as though he were engaged in serious business.

"Well, how goes it, Mikhaílo Savélitch,"—I began:—"hast thou caught any fish?"

"Why, please to look in the basket yonder: I've caught two perch, and five small mullet. . . . Show them, Styópka."

Styópushka held the wicker basket toward me.

"How art thou getting on, Stepán?"—I asked him.

"L . . . . i . . . . i . . . a-a . . . . so-so-o, dear little father, pretty well,"—replied Stepán, stammering as though a pud weight were hung on his tongue.

"And is Mitrofán well?"

"Yes, o-o-of . . . . . course, dear little father."

The poor fellow turned away.

"The fish are n't biting well, somehow,"—remarked The Fog:—"it 's awfully hot; the fish have all hidden themselves under the bushes, and gone to sleep. . . . . Bait the hook with a worm, Styópa." (Styópushka got a worm, laid it on his palm, gave it a couple of whacks, put it on the hook, spat on it, and gave it to The Fog.)

"Thanks, Styópa. . . . And you, dear little father,"—he went on, turning to me:—"you are pleased to go a-hunting?"

"As you see."

"Just so, sir. . . . . And what 's that hound of yours, English or some sort of Kurland animal?"

The old man was fond of showing off: as much as to say, "We 've seen the world also!"

"I don't know of what breed he is, but he 's a good one."

"Just so, sir. . . . And are you pleased to travel with dogs?"

"I have a couple of leashes."

The Fog smiled, and shook his head.

"That 's exactly the way: one man is fond of dogs, and another would n't take them as a gift. What I think, according to my simple judgment, is: that dogs should be kept more for the dignity of the thing, so to speak. . . . . And that everything should be kept in style: and that the horses should be in style, as is proper, and everything in style. The late Count—may the kingdom of heaven be his!—was not a sportsman by nature, I must admit; but he kept dogs, and was pleased to go out with them a couple of times a year. The whippers-in would assemble in the courtyard, in scarlet kaftans trimmed with galloon, and blow blasts on their horns; his Illustriousness would condescend to come out, and his Illustriousness's horse would be led up; his Illustriousness would mount, and the head huntsman would put his feet into the stirrups, take off his cap, and present the reins to him in it. His Illustriousness would deign to crack his hunting-crop, and the whippers-in would begin to halloo, and move away from the courtyard. A groom would ride behind his Illustriousness, and lead the master's two favourite hounds in a leash, with his own hands, and would so keep a watch, you know. . . . . And he sits high aloft, the groom does, on a kazák saddle,[1] such a rosy-cheeked fellow he was, and rolls his little eyes

[1] The kazák saddle has a fat down-cushion, between a high pommel and high back.—TRANSLATOR.

around. . . . . Well, and of course there were guests on this occasion. And amusement and honour were observed. . . . Akh, he has broken loose, the Asiatic!"—he suddenly added, pulling out his hook.

"They say that the Count led a pretty lively life in his day—how was that?"—I asked.

The old man spat on the worm, and flung in his hook.

"He was a very lordly man, everybody knew, sir. The leading persons from Petersburg, as one may say, used to come to visit him. They used to sit at table and eat in their blue ribbons. Well, and he was a master-hand at entertaining them. He would summon me to him: 'Fog,' says he, 'I require some live sterlet to-morrow; order them to be procured, dost thou hear?'—'I obey, your Illustriousness.' He used to import embroidered coats, wigs, canes, perfumes, ladekolon[1] snuff-boxes, such huge pictures, of the best quality, from Paris itself. He would give a banquet,—O Lord and Sovereign Master of my life![2] what fireworks and pleasure-drives there would be! They would even fire off cannon. There were forty musicians alone on hand. He kept a German bandmaster; and the German was awfully conceited: he wanted to eat at the same table with the gentlemen and ladies; so his

[1] Eau de Cologne.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] A quotation from a familiar prayer, by St. Ephraim of Syria, used during the Great Fast (Lent).—TRANSLATOR.

Illustriousness gave orders that he should be turned out of doors, and bidden godspeed: 'My musicians understand their business without him,' says he. You know how it was: the master had the power to do as he liked. They would set to dancing, and dance until dawn, and chiefly the lakosez-matradura . . . . .[1] eh . . . . . eh . . . . . eh . . . . . thou art caught, brother!" . . . . (The old man pulled a small perch out of the water.) "Take it, Styópa.—He was the right sort of a master, the master was,"—pursued the old man, throwing his line again:—"and he was a kind soul too! He 'd thrash you, on occasion—and the first you knew, he 'd have forgotten all about it. Okh, those mistresses, Lord forgive! 'T was they that ruined him. And, you see, he chose them chiefly from the lower classes. You 'd suppose that they could n't want for anything more. But no,—you must give them the most costly thing in the whole of Europe! And I must say: why not live at ease,—that 's the proper thing for a gentleman . . . . . but as for ruining yourself, that 's not right. There was one in particular: her name was Akulína; she 's dead now,—the kingdom of heaven be hers! She was a simple wench, the daughter of the village policeman of Sitóvo, and such a termagant! She used to slap the Count's cheeks. She bewitched him utterly. She shaved the brow of my

[1] L'écossais.—Translator.

nephew:[1] he had spilled chocolate on her new gown . . . . and he was not the only one whose brow she shaved. Yes. . . . . And nevertheless, it was a good little time!"—added the old man, with a deep sigh, as he dropped his eyes and relapsed into silence.

"But you had a severe master, I see,"—I began, after a brief pause.

"That was the taste then, dear little father,"—returned the old man, shaking his head.

"That is no longer done now,"—I remarked, without removing my eyes from him.

He surveyed me with a sidelong glance.

"Now, things are better, certainly,"—he muttered—and flung his line far out.

We were sitting in the shade; but even in the shade it was stifling. The heavy, sultry air seemed to have died down; the burning face sought the breeze with anguish, but there was no breeze. The sun fairly beat from the blue, darkling sky; directly in front of us, on the other shore, a field of oats gleamed yellow, overgrown here and there with wormwood, and not a single ear of the grain stirred. A little lower down, a peasant's horse was standing in the river up to his knees, and lazily swishing himself with his wet tail; now and then, a large fish swam up under an overhanging bush, emitted a bubble,

[1] That is, had him made a soldier for the long term then obligatory. The hair was shaved to mark the man and prevent desertion.—TRANSLATOR.

and gently sank to the bottom, leaving behind him a faint surge. The grasshoppers were shrilling in the rusty grass; the quails were calling in a reluctant sort of way; hawks floated above the fields, and frequently came to a standstill, swiftly fluttering their wings, and spreading out their tails like a fan. We sat motionless, overwhelmed with the heat. All at once, behind us, in the ravine, a noise resounded: some one was descending to the spring. I looked round, and beheld a peasant about fifty years of age, dusty, in shirt and bark-slippers, with a plaited birch-bark wallet and a long coat thrown over his shoulders. He approached the spring, drank eagerly, and rose to his feet.

"Eh, Vlas?"—cried The Fog, taking a look at him:—"good day, brother. Whence has God brought thee?"

"Good day, Mikhaílo Savélitch,"—said the peasant, advancing toward us,—"from afar."

"Where hast thou been?"—The Fog asked him.

"I have been to Moscow, to the master."

"Why?"

"I went to petition him."

"To petition him about what?"

"Why, that he would reduce my quit-rent, or put me on husbandry-service, or send me for settlement elsewhere, perhaps. . . . My son is dead —so I can't manage it now alone."

"Is thy son dead?"

"Yes. The deceased,"—added the peasant, after a brief silence:—"lived in Moscow, as a cabman; I must confess that he paid my quit-rent."

"But is it possible that thou art on quit-rent now?"

"Yes."

"What did thy master say?"

"What did the master say? He drove me off! 'How darest thou come straight to me,' says he; 'thou art bound to report first to the steward . . . . and where am I to transfer thee for settlement? Do thou first,' says he, 'pay up thine arrears.' He was thoroughly angry."

"Well, and so thou hast come back?"

"So I have come home. I should have liked to find out whether the deceased had left any goods behind him, but I could n't get a straight answer. I says to his employer, says I: 'I 'm Philip's father;' and he says to me: 'How do I know that?—And thy son left nothing,' says he; 'he 's in debt to me, to boot.' Well, and so I went my way."

The peasant told us all this with a grin, as though it were a question of some one else; but a tear welled up in his small, puckered-up eyes, and his lips quivered.

"Art thou going home now?"

"Why, where else should I be going? Of

course, I 'm going home. My wife must be whistling into her fist now with hunger, I think."

" But thou mightest . . . knowest thou . . ." began Styópushka suddenly,—then grew confused, stopped short, and began to rummage in the pot.

" And shalt thou go to the steward? "—went on The Fog, glancing at Styópa not without surprise.

" Why should I go to him? . . . . I 'm in arrears, anyway. My son was ailing for about a year before he died, so that he did not pay even his own quit-rent. . . . And I don't care: there is nothing to be got from me. . . . Be as crafty as you will here, brother,—'t is in vain: my head is not responsible! " The peasant broke into a laugh. " Kintilyán Semyónitch may worry over it as he will . . . . but . . . ."

Again Vlas laughed.

" Well, that 's bad, brother Vlas,"—articulated The Fog, pausing between his words.

" How is it bad? No. . . . ." Vlas's voice broke. " How hot it is! "—he went on, mopping his brow with his sleeve.

" Who is your master? "—I inquired.

" Count * * *, Valerián Petróvitch."

" The son of Piótr Ílitch? "

" Yes, the son of Piótr Ílitch,"—replied The Fog. " The deceased Piótr Ílitch allotted Vlas's village to him during his lifetime."

" Is the Count well? "

"Yes, thank God,"—responded Vlas.—"Handsome as steel, his face is as though it were stuffed with fat."

"See there, dear little father,"—continued The Fog, turning to me:—"it would be all right near Moscow, but he has put him on quit-rent here."

"But at how much a household?"

"Ninety-five rubles a household,"—muttered Vlas.

"Well, there now, you see; and there 's only the littlest bit of ground, because 't is all the master's forest."

"And they say he has sold that,"—remarked the peasant.

"Well, there now, you see . . . . Styópa, give me a worm. . . . . Hey, Styópa? What 's the matter with thee? hast thou fallen asleep?"

Styópushka started. The peasant sat down beside us. Again we maintained silence for a while. On the other shore, some one started up a song, and such a mournful one! . . . My poor Vlas grew dejected. . . . . .

Half an hour later we parted company.

IV

THE DISTRICT DOCTOR

One day, in autumn, on my way home from the distant fields, I caught cold, and was taken ill. Fortunately, the fever overtook me in the county-town, in the hotel. I sent for the doctor. Half an hour later, the district physician made his appearance, a man of short stature, thin and black-haired. He prescribed for me the customary sudorific, ordered the application of mustard-plasters, very deftly tucked my five-ruble bank-note under his cuff,—but emitted a dry cough and glanced aside as he did so,—and was on the very verge of going off about his own affairs, but somehow got to talking and remained. The fever oppressed me; I foresaw a sleepless night, and was glad to chat with the kindly man. Tea was served. My doctor began to talk. He was far from a stupid young fellow, and expressed himself vigorously and quite entertainingly. Strange things happen in the world: you may live a long time, and on friendly terms, with one man, and never once speak frankly from your soul with him; with another you hardly manage to make acquaintance—and behold:

either you have blurted out to him your most secret thoughts, as though you were at confession, or he has blurted out his to you. I know not how I won the confidence of my new friend,—only, without rhyme or reason, as the saying is, he "took" and told me about a rather remarkable occurrence; and now I am going to impart his narrative to the indulgent reader. I shall endeavour to express myself in the physician's words.

"You are not acquainted,"—he began, in a weak and quavering voice (such is the effect of unadulterated Beryózoff snuff):—"you are not acquainted with the judge here, Pável Lúkitch Mýloff, are you? . . . . . You are not? . . . . . Well, never mind." (He cleared his throat and wiped his eyes.) "Well, then, please to observe that the affair happened—to be accurate—during the Great Fast, in the very height of the thaw. I was sitting with him at his house, our judge's, and playing preference. Our judge is a nice man, and fond of playing preference. All of a sudden" (my doctor frequently employed that expression: "all of a sudden") "I am told: 'A man is asking for you.' 'What does he want?'—said I. They tell me: 'He has brought a note—it must be from a sick person.' —'Give me the note,'—said I. And so it proved to be from a sick person. . . . . Well, very good,—that 's our bread and butter, you un-

derstand. . . . . And this was what was the matter: the person who wrote to me was a landed proprietress, a widow; she says: 'My daughter is dying, come for the sake of our Lord God, and horses have been sent for you.' Well, and all that is of no consequence. . . . . But she lives twenty versts from town, night is falling, and the roads are such, that—faugh! And she herself was the poorest of the poor, I could n't expect to receive more than two rubles,[1] and even that much was doubtful; and, in all probability, I should be obliged to take a bolt of crash-linen and some scraps or other. However, you understand, duty before everything. All of a sudden, I hand over my cards to Kalliópin, and set off homeward. I look: a wretched little peasant-cart is standing in front of my porch; peasant-horses,—pot-bellied, extremely pot-bellied,—the hair on them a regular matted felt; and the coachman is sitting hatless, by way of respect. Well, thinks I to myself: evidently, brother, thy masters don't eat off gold. . . . . You are pleased to laugh, but I can tell you a poor man, like myself, takes everything into consideration. . . . . If the coachman sits like a prince, and does n't doff his cap, and grins in his beard to

[1] The doctor's fee, as fixed by law, in Russia, is absurdly small. Every one, therefore, gives what he sees fit—certain prices being only tacitly understood as proper for certain men. The doctor is supposed to accept what is offered, and it is contrary to etiquette for him to remonstrate against the sum.—TRANSLATOR.

boot, and waggles his whip, you may bet boldly on getting a couple of bank-bills! But, in this case, I see that the matter does not smack of that. However, thought I to myself, it can't be helped: duty before everything. I catch up the most indispensable remedies, and set out. Will you believe it, we barely managed to drag ourselves to our goal. The road was hellish: brooks, snow, mud, water-washed gullies; for, all of a sudden, a dam had burst—alas! Notwithstanding, I got there. The house is tiny, with a straw-thatched roof. The windows are illuminated: which signifies, that they are expecting me. An old woman comes out to receive me,—such a dignified old woman, in a mob-cap; 'Save her,' says she, 'she is dying.' 'Pray don't worry,' I say to her. . . . . 'Where is the patient?'—'Here, please come this way.'—I look: 't is a neat little room, in the corner a shrine-lamp, on the bed a girl of twenty years, unconscious. She is fairly burning with heat, she breathes heavily:—'t is fever. There are two other young girls present, her sisters,—thoroughly frightened, in tears.—'See there,' say they, 'yesterday she was perfectly well, and ate with appetite: this morning she complained of her head, and toward evening, all of a sudden, she got into this condition.' . . . . I said again: 'Pray don't worry,'—you know, the doctor is bound to say that,—and set to work. I let blood, ordered the appli-

cation of mustard-plasters, prescribed a potion. In the meantime, I looked and looked at her, and do you know:—well, upon my word, I never before had seen such a face . . . . a beauty, in one word! I fairly go to pieces with compassion. Such pleasing features, eyes . . . . . Well, thank God, she quieted down; the perspiration broke out, she seemed to regain consciousness, cast a glance around her, smiled, passed her hand over her face. . . . . Her sisters bent over her, and inquired: 'What ails thee?'—'Nothing,'—says she, and turned away. . . . . I look . . and lo, she has fallen asleep. 'Well,' I say, 'now the patient must be left in peace.' So we all went out of the room on tiptoe; only the maid remained, in case she should be needed. And in the drawing-room, the samovár was already standing on the table, and there was Jamaica rum also: in our business, we cannot get along without it. They gave me tea, and begged me to spend the night there. . . . I consented: what was the use of going away now! The old woman kept moaning. 'What 's the matter with you?' said I: 'she 'll live, pray do not feel uneasy, and the best thing you can do is to get some rest yourself: it 's two o'clock.'—'But will you give orders that I am to be awakened, if anything should happen?'—'I will, I will.'—The old woman went off, and the girls also betook themselves to their own room; they made up a bed

for me in the drawing-room. So I lay down,—but I could n't get to sleep,—and no wonder! I seemed to be fretting over something. I could n't get my sick girl out of my mind. At last, I could endure it no longer, and all of a sudden, I got up: I thought: ' I 'll go and see how the patient is getting along.' Her bedroom adjoined the drawing-room. Well, I rose, and opened the door softly,—and my heart began to beat violently. I took a look: the maid was fast asleep, with her mouth open, and even snoring, the beast! and the sick girl was lying with her face toward me, and throwing her arms about, the poor thing! I went up to her. . . All of a sudden, she opened her eyes, and fixed them on me! . . . . . ' Who is this? Who is this?'—I was disconcerted.—'Don't be alarmed, madam,' said I: ' I 'm the doctor, I have come to see how you are feeling.'—' You are the doctor? '—' Yes, the doctor. . . . . Your mamma sent to the town for me; we have bled you, madam; now, please to lie quiet, and in a couple of days, God willing, we 'll have you on your feet again.'—' Akh, yes, yes, doctor, don't let me die . . . . please, please don't! '—' What makes you say that, God bless you! '—' Her fever is starting up again,' I thought to myself. I felt her pulse: it was the fever, sure enough. She looked at me,—then, all of a sudden, she seized my hand.—' I 'll tell you why I don't want to die, I 'll tell you, I 'll tell you . . . . now we

are alone; only, if you please, you must n't let anybody know . . . . listen!' . . . . I bent down; she brought her lips to my very ear, her hair swept my cheek,—I confess that my head reeled, —and began to whisper. . . . . I could understand nothing. . . . . Akh, why, she was delirious. . . . . She whispered and whispered, and very rapidly at that, and not in Russian, finished, shuddered, dropped her head back on the pillow, and menaced me with her finger.—' See that you tell no one, doctor.' . . . Somehow or other, I contrived to soothe her, gave her a drink, waked up the maid, and left the room."

Here the doctor took snuff frantically, and grew torpid for a moment.

" But, contrary to my expectation,"—he went on,—" the patient was no better on the following day. I cogitated, and cogitated, and all of a sudden, I decided to remain, although other patients were expecting me. . . . But, you know, that cannot be neglected: your practice suffers from it. But, in the first place, the sick girl was, really, in a desperate condition; and, in the second place, I must tell the truth, I felt strongly attracted to her. Moreover, the whole family pleased me. Although they were not wealthy people, yet their culture was, I may say, rare. . . . . Their father had been a learned man, a writer; he had died in poverty, of course, but had managed to impart a splendid education

to his children; he had also left behind him many books. Whether it was because I worked so zealously over the sick girl, or for other reasons, at all events, I venture to assert that they became as fond of me as though I had been a relative. . . . . In the meantime, the thaw had reduced the roads to a frightful condition: all communications were, so to speak, utterly cut off. . . . The sick girl did not get well . . . day after day, day after day. . . . But so, sir . . . . then, sir . . . ." (The doctor paused for a while).—" Really, I do not know how to state it to you, sir . . ." (Again he took snuff, grunted, and swallowed a mouthful of tea.) " I will tell you, without circumlocution,—my patient . . . . anyhow . . . . well, either she fell in love with me . . . . . or, no, she did n't exactly fall in love with me . . . but, anyway . . . really, how shall I put it? . . ." (The doctor dropped his eyes, and flushed crimson.)

" No,"—he went on with vivacity:—" she did n't fall in love with me! One must, after all, estimate one's self at one's true value. She was a cultivated girl, clever, well-read, and I had forgotten even my Latin, completely, I may say. So far as my figure is concerned " (the doctor surveyed himself with a smile), " also, I have nothing to boast of, apparently. But the Lord God did n't distort me into a fool, either: I won't call white black; I understand a thing or two

myself. For example, I understood very well indeed that Alexandra Andréevna—her name was Alexandra Andréevna—did not feel love for me, but, so to speak, a friendly inclination, respect, something of that sort. Although she herself, possibly, was mistaken on that point, yet her condition was such, as you can judge for yourself . . . . . However,"—added the doctor, who had uttered all these disjointed speeches without stopping to take breath, and with obvious embarrassment:—" I have strayed from the subject a bit, I think. . . . So you will not understand anything . . . . . but here now, with your permission, I 'll tell you the whole story in due order."

He finished his glass of tea, and began to talk in a more composed voice.

" Well, then, to proceed, sir. My patient grew constantly worse, and worse, and worse. You are not a medical man, my dear sir; you cannot comprehend what takes place in the soul of a fellow-being, especially when he first begins to divine that his malady is conquering him. What becomes of his self-confidence! All of a sudden, you grow inexpressibly timid. It seems to you, that you have forgotten everything you ever knew, and that the patient does not trust you and that others are beginning to observe that you have lost your wits, and communicate the symptoms to you unwillingly, gaze askance at you,

whisper together . . . . . eh, 't is an evil plight! But there certainly must be a remedy for this malady, you think, if you could only find it. Here now, is n't this it? You try it—no, that 's not it! You don't give the medicine time to act properly . . . . now you grasp at this, now at that. You take your prescription-book, —it certainly must be there, you think. To tell the truth, you sometimes open it at haphazard: perchance Fate, you think to yourself . . . . . But, in the meanwhile, the person is dying; and some other physician might have saved him. A consultation is necessary, you say: 'I will not assume the responsibility.' And what a fool you seem under such circumstances! Well, and you 'll learn to bear it patiently, in course of time you won't mind it. The man dies—it is no fault of yours: you have followed the rules. But there 's another torturing thing about it: you behold blind confidence in you, and you yourself feel that you are not capable of helping. Well then, that was precisely the sort of confidence that Alexandra Andréevna's whole family had in me:—and they forgot to think that their daughter was in danger. I, also, on my side, assured them that it was all right, while my soul sank into my heels. To crown the calamity, the thaw and breaking up of the roads were so bad, that the coachman would travel whole days at a time in quest of medicine. And I never left

the sick-chamber, I could n't tear myself away, you know, I related ridiculous little anecdotes, and played cards with her. I sat up all night. My old woman thanked me with tears; but I thought to myself: 'I don't deserve your gratitude.' I will confess to you frankly,—there 's no reason why I should dissimulate now,—I had fallen in love with my patient. And Alexandra Andréevna had become attached to me: she would let no one but me enter the room. She would begin to chat with me, and would interrogate me—where I had studied, how I lived, who were my parents, whom did I visit? And I felt that she ought not to talk, but as for prohibiting her, positively, you know, I could n't do it. I would clutch my head:—'What art thou doing, thou villain?'—But then, she would take my hand, and hold it, and gaze at me, gaze long, very long, turn away, sigh, and say: 'How kind you are!' Her hands were so hot, her eyes were big and languishing.—'Yes,' she would say,—'you are a good man, you are not like our neighbours . . . no, you are not that sort. . . . How is it that I have never known you until now!' —'Calm yourself, Alexandra Andréevna,'—I would say. . . . 'I assure you, I feel I do not know how I have merited . . . . only, compose yourself, for God's sake . . . . everything will be all right, you will get well.'—And yet, I must confess to you," added the doctor, bending for-

ward, and elevating his eyebrows:—" that they had very little to do with the neighbours, because the lower sort were not their equals, and pride prevented their becoming acquainted with the rich ones. As I have told you, it was an extremely cultured family:—and, so, you know, I felt flattered. She would take her medicine from no hands but mine . . . she would sit up half-way, the poor girl, with my assistance, take it, and look at me . . . . and my heart would fairly throb. But, in the meantime, she grew worse and worse: ' She will die,' I thought, ' she will infallibly die.' Will you believe it, I felt like lying down in the grave myself: but her mother and sisters were watching, and looking me in the eye . . . . and their confidence disappeared.

" ' What is it? What is the matter?'—' Nothing, ma'am; 't is all right, ma'am!'—but it was n't all right, I had merely lost my head! Well, sir, one night I was sitting alone once more, beside the sick girl. The maid was sitting in the room also, and snoring with all her might. . . . Well, there was no use in being hard on the unfortunate maid: she was harassed enough. Alexandra Andréevna had been feeling very badly all the evening; she was tortured by the fever. She kept tossing herself about clear up to midnight; at last, she seemed to fall asleep; at all events, she did not stir, but lay quietly. The shrine-lamp was burning in front of the

holy picture in the corner. I was sitting, you know, with drooping head, and dozing also. All of a sudden, I felt exactly as though some one had nudged me in the ribs. I turned round. . . O Lord, my God! Alexandra Andréevna was staring at me with all her eyes . . . . . her lips parted, her cheeks fairly blazing.—'What is the matter with you?'—'Doctor, surely I am dying?'—'God forbid!'—'No, doctor, no; please don't tell me that I shall recover . . . . don't tell me . . . if you only knew . . . listen, for God's sake, don't conceal my condition from me!'—and she breathed very fast.—'If I know for certain that I must die . . . . I will tell you everything, everything!'—'For heaven's sake, Alexandra Andréevna!'—'Listen, I have n't been asleep at all, you see; I 've been watching you this long while . . . . for God's sake . . . I believe in you, you are a kind man, you are an honest man; I adjure you, by all that is holy on earth—tell me the truth! If you only knew how important it is to me. . . Doctor, tell me, for God's sake, am I in danger?'—'What shall I say to you, Alexandra Andréevna, for mercy's sake!'—'For God's sake, I beseech you!'—'I cannot conceal from you, Alexandra Andréevna, the fact that you really are in danger, but God is merciful . . . . . .'—'I shall die, I shall die!' . . . . And she seemed to be glad, her face became so cheerful; I was frightened.—'But don't be afraid,

don't be afraid, death does not terrify me in the least.'—All of a sudden, she raised herself up, and propped herself on her elbow.—'Now . . . . well, now I can tell you that I am grateful to you with all my soul, that you are a kind, good man, that I love you.' . . . . I stared at her like a crazy man; dread fell upon me, you know. . . 'Do you hear?—I love you!' . . . . 'Alexandra Andréevna, how have I deserved this!'—'No, no, you don't understand me . . . . thou dost not understand me.' . . . . And all of a sudden, she stretched out her arms, clasped my head, and kissed me. . . . Will you believe it, I came near shrieking aloud. . . . . I flung myself on my knees, and hid my head in the pillow. She was silent; her fingers trembled on my hair; I heard her weeping. I began to comfort her, to reassure her . . . . to tell the truth, I really do not know what I said to her.—'You will waken the maid, Alexandra Andréevna,' I said to her. . . 'I thank you . . . . believe me . . . . calm yourself.'—'Yes, enough, enough,' she repeated. 'God be with them all; well, they will wake; well, they will come—it makes no difference: for I shall die. . . . . But why art thou timid, what dost thou fear? raise thy head. . . . Can it be myself? . . . . in that case, forgive me,'—'Alexandra Andréevna, what are you saying? . . . . I love you, Alexandra Andréevna.'—She looked me straight in the eye, and opened her arms.

—'Then embrace me.' . . I will tell you frankly: I don't understand why I did not go crazy that night. I was conscious that my patient was killing herself; I saw that she was not quite clear in her head; I understood, also, that had she not thought herself on the brink of death, she would not have thought of me; for, you may say what you like, 't is a terrible thing, all the same, to die at the age of twenty, without having loved any one: that is what was tormenting her, you see; that is why she, in her despair, clutched even at me,—do you understand now? But she did not release me from her arms.—'Spare me, Alexandra Andréevna, and spare yourself also,' I said. —'Why should I?' she said. 'For I must die, you know.' . . . She kept repeating this incessantly.—'See here, now; if I knew that I would recover, and become an honest young lady again, I should be ashamed, actually ashamed . . . . but as it is, what does it matter?'—'But who told you that you were going to die?'—'Eh, no, enough of that, thou canst not deceive me, thou dost not know how to lie; look at thyself.'—'You will live, Alexandra Andréevna; I will cure you. We will ask your mother's blessing on our marriage. . . . We will unite ourselves in the bonds. . . We shall be happy.'—'No, no, I have taken your word for it, I must die . . . . thou hast promised me . . . thou hast told me so.' . . . This was bitter to me, bitter for many reasons. And you

can judge for yourself, what trifling things happen: they seem to be nothing, yet they hurt. She took it into her head to ask me what my name was,—not my surname, but my baptismal name. My ill-luck decreed that it should be Trífon. Yes, sir, yes, sir; Trífon, Trífon Ivánovitch. Everybody in the house addressed me as doctor. There was no help for it, I said: 'Trífon, madam.' She narrowed her eyes, shook her head, and whispered something in French,—okh, yes, and it was something bad, and then she laughed, and in an ugly way too. Well, and I spent the greater part of the night with her in that manner. In the morning, I left the room, as though I had been a madman; I went into her room again by daylight, after tea. My God, my God! She was unrecognisable: corpses have more colour when they are laid in their coffins. I swear to you, by my honour, I do not understand now, I positively do not understand, how I survived that torture. Three days, three nights more did my patient linger on . . . . and what nights they were! What was there that she did not say to me! . . . . And, on the last night, just imagine,—I was sitting beside her, and beseeching one thing only of God: 'Take her to Thyself, as speedily as may be, and me along with her.' . . . All of a sudden, the old mother bursts into the room. . . . . I had already told her, on the preceding day, that there was but little hope, that

the girl was in a bad way, and that it would not be out of place to send for the priest. As soon as the sick girl beheld her mother, she said:—'Well, now, 't is a good thing thou hast come . . . look at us, we love each other, we have given each other our promise.'—'What does she mean, doctor, what does she mean?'—I turned deathly pale.—'She 's delirious, ma'am,' said I; 't is the fever heat.' . . But the girl said: 'Enough of that, enough of that, thou hast just said something entirely different to me, and hast accepted a ring from me. . . . . Why dost thou dissimulate? My mother is kind, she will forgive, she will understand; but I am dying—I have no object in lying; give me thy hand.' . . . . I sprang up and fled from the room. The old woman, of course, guessed how things stood.

"But I will not weary you, and I must admit that it is painful to me to recall all this. My patient died on the following day. The kingdom of heaven be hers!" added the doctor hastily, with a sigh. "Before she died, she asked her family to leave the room, and leave me alone with her.—'Forgive me,'—she said,—'perhaps I am culpable in your sight . . . . . my illness . . . but, believe me, I have never loved any one more than I have loved you . . . . do not forget me . . . . take care of my ring.' . . . . ."

The doctor turned away; I took his hand.

"Ekh,"—he said,—"let 's talk of something

else, or would n't you like to play preference for a while? Men like us, you know, ought not to yield to such lofty sentiments. All we fellows have to think of is: how to keep the children from squalling, and our wives from scolding. For since then, you see, I have managed to contract a legal marriage, as the saying is. . . Of course . . . . I took a merchant's daughter: she had seven thousand rubles of dowry. Her name is Akulína; just a match for Trífon. She 's a vixen, I must tell you; but, luckily, she sleeps all day. . . But how about that game of preference?"

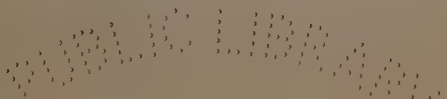
We sat down to play preference, for kopék stakes. Trífon Ivánitch won two rubles and a half from me—and went away late, greatly elated with his victory.

V

MY NEIGHBOUR RADÍLOFF

In autumn, the woodcock frequently take up their stand in ancient linden parks. We have a good many such parks in the Government of Orel. Our great-grandfathers, in selecting residence sites, invariably laid out a couple of desyatínas of good land in a fruit-orchard, with alleys of linden-trees. During the last fifty—at the most, seventy—years, these farms, these "noblemen's nests," have been gradually disappearing from the face of the earth; their manors have rotted away or have been sold for removal, the stone offices have become converted into heaps of ruins, the apple-trees have died out and gone for firewood, the fences and wattled hedges have been annihilated. Only the lindens have thriven gloriously as of yore, and now, surrounded by tilled fields, proclaim to our volatile race "our fathers and brethren departed this life."[1] A most beautiful tree is such an aged linden.

[1] A quotation from the "augmented litany" in the services of the Eastern Catholic Church: "Furthermore, we pray for .... all our devout fathers and brethren departed this life before us, Orthodox believers, who here, and in all the world, lie asleep in the Lord."—Translator.



. . . . . Even the ruthless axe of the Russian peasant spares it. Its leaves are small, its mighty boughs spread out widely in all directions, beneath them reigns eternal shadow.

One day, as I was roving with Ermolái over the fields in quest of partridges, I espied on one side an abandoned park, and directed my footsteps thither. No sooner had I entered the edge of the grove than a woodcock rose with a whir from the bushes. I fired, and at the same moment a cry rang out a few paces from me: the frightened face of a young girl peered forth from behind the trees, and immediately vanished. Ermolái rushed up to me.—"Why do you shoot here? A landed proprietor lives here."

Before I could answer him, before my dog, with noble dignity, could fetch me the bird I had killed, hasty footsteps made themselves audible, and a man of lofty stature, with moustaches, emerged from the grove, and halted in front of me, with an aspect of displeasure. I made my excuses as best I might, mentioned my name, and offered him the bird which had been shot on his domain.

"Very well,"—he said to me, with a smile, "I will accept your game, but only on one condition: that you will stay to dinner with us."

I must confess that I was not greatly pleased at his suggestion, but it was impossible to refuse.

"I am the proprietor who lives here, and your

neighbour, Radíloff; perhaps you have heard of me,"—went on my new acquaintance:—" this is Sunday, and my dinner ought to be fairly decent, otherwise I would not have invited you."

I made the sort of reply which is customary on such occasions, and started to follow him. The recently cleaned path soon led us out of the linden grove; we entered the kitchen-garden. Among the aged apple-trees and overgrown gooseberry bushes gleamed round, pale-green heads of cabbage; hop-vines garlanded the tall poles in festoons; dark-brown sticks rose in dense array from the beds, entangled with dried pea-vines; huge, flat squashes seemed to be wallowing on the ground; cucumbers gleamed yellow from beneath their dusty, angular leaves; along the wattled fence tall nettles rocked to and fro; in two or three places Tatár honeysuckle, elder-trees, and sweet-briar grew in masses,—the remains of bygone " flower-plots." By the side of a small fish-pond, filled with reddish and slimy water, a well was visible, surrounded by puddles. Ducks were busily splashing and waddling in these puddles; a dog, trembling all over and with eyes screwed up, was gnawing a bone in the open glade; a piebald cow was nipping idly at the grass there, now and then flirting her tail over her gaunt back. The path swerved aside; from behind thick willows and birches, there peeped forth at us a small, aged grey house, with a board

roof and a crooked porch. Radíloff halted.—"By the way,"—he said good-naturedly, looking me square in the face:—"Now I come to think of it; perhaps you don't want to enter my house at all; in that case . . . . ."

I did not give him an opportunity to finish, and assured him that, on the contrary, it would give me great pleasure to dine with him.

"Well, as you like."

We entered the house. A young fellow in a long kaftan of heavy blue cloth met us on the porch. Radíloff immediately ordered him to give Ermolái some vódka; my huntsman made a respectful obeisance to the back of the magnanimous giver. From the anteroom, papered with divers motley-hued pictures and hung around with cages, we entered a small room—Radíloff's study. I took off my hunting accoutrements, and set my gun in one corner; the young fellow in the long-tailed kaftan brushed me off with alacrity.

"Come, now let us go into the drawing-room,"—said Radíloff, cordially:—"I will introduce you to my mother."

I followed him. In the drawing-room, on the central divan, sat an old lady of short stature, in a light-brown gown and a white mob-cap, with a kindly, emaciated face, a timid and mournful gaze.

"Here, mother, let me introduce our neighbour, * * *."

The old lady half-rose, and bowed to me, without letting go her hold on a coarse worsted reticule in the shape of a bag.

"Have you been long in our parts?"—she asked, in a weak and gentle voice, blinking her eyes.

"No, madam, not long."

"Do you intend to stay here long?"

"Until winter, I think."

The old lady relapsed into silence.

"And here,"—joined in Radíloff, pointing to a tall, thin man, whom I had not noticed on entering the drawing-room:—"this is Feódor Mikhyéitch. . . . Come on, Fédya, show the visitor thine art. Why hast thou tucked thyself into a corner?"

Feódor Mikhyéitch immediately rose from his chair, picked up from the window-sill a miserable fiddle, grasped his bow—not by the end, as is the proper way, but by the middle, leaned the fiddle against his breast, shut his eyes, and began to dance, singing a song and sawing away on the strings. Judging from his appearance, he was seventy years old; a long nankeen coat dangled mournfully against his thin, bony limbs. He danced; now he shook his small, bald head in a dashing way, again he twisted it about, stretched out his sinewy neck, stamped his feet up and down on one spot, and sometimes, with evident difficulty, he bent his knees. His toothless mouth emitted a decrepit voice. Radíloff must have

divined, from the expression of my face, that Fédya's " art " did not afford me much pleasure.

" Come, very good, old man, that will do,"—he said:—" thou mayest go and reward thyself."

Feódor Mikhyéitch immediately laid the fiddle on the window-sill, bowed first to me, as visitor, then to the old lady, then to Radíloff, and left the room.

" He was once a landed proprietor also,"—pursued my new friend:—" and a rich one, but he ruined himself—so now he lives with me . . . . but in his day he was regarded as the leading gay rake in the government; he carried two wives away from their husbands, he kept singers, he himself danced and sang in a masterly manner. . . . But would n't you like some vodka? for dinner is already on the table."

A young girl, the one of whom I had caught a glimpse in the garden, entered the room.

" Ah, here 's Olya too! "—remarked Radíloff, slightly turning away his head:—" I beg that you will love and favour her. . . . Well, let 's go to dinner."

We betook ourselves to the dining-room, and seated ourselves. While we were walking from the drawing-room and taking our seats, Feódor Mikhyéitch, whose eyes had begun to beam and his nose to flush a little red from his " reward," sang: " Let the thunder of victory resound! " A special place was set for him in one corner, at

a little table without a cloth. The poor old man could not boast of cleanliness, and therefore he was always kept at a certain distance from the company. He crossed himself, sighed, and began to eat like a shark. The dinner really was far from bad, and, in its quality of a Sunday dinner, did not lack quivering jelly and Spanish breezes (patties). At table, Radíloff, who had served for ten years in an army infantry regiment, and had been in Turkey, began to tell stories. I listened to him attentively, and stealthily watched Olga. She was not very pretty; but the calm and decided expression of her face, her broad, white brow, thick hair, and, in particular, her brown eyes, small but sensible, clear and vivacious, would have struck any one else in my place. She seemed to watch Radíloff's every word; it was not interest but passionate attention which was depicted on her countenance. Radíloff, as to years, might have been her father; he called her "thou," but I instantly divined that she was not his daughter. In the course of the conversation he mentioned his deceased wife—"her sister," he added, indicating Olga. She blushed swiftly, and dropped her eyes. Radíloff paused for a while, and changed the subject. The old lady never uttered a word throughout the dinner, ate hardly anything herself, and did not press anything on me. Her features exhaled a sort of timorous and hopeless expecta-

tion, that sadness of old age which makes the onlooker's heart contract painfully. Toward the end of the dinner Feódor Mikhyéitch undertook to " glorify " [1] the hosts and the guest, but Radíloff, after a glance at me, requested him to hold his tongue; the old man passed his hand across his mouth, blinked his eyes, bowed and sat down again, but this time on the very edge of his chair. After dinner, Radíloff and I betook ourselves to his study.

In people who are powerfully and constantly occupied by a single thought or a single passion, there is perceptible something common to them all, a certain external resemblance in demeanour, however different, nevertheless, may be their qualities, capacities, positions in the world, and

[1] The " Glory " is reckoned among the Christmas songs, or carols, and in its dignified form relates, like many other folk-songs, to the harvest. In this form, extracts or adaptations of it are used in connection with solemn occasions—a fragment of it appeared as part of the miniature decoration of the menu for the present Emperor's coronation banquet, for instance. In another form, it is one of the Twelfth-Night songs among young people, and used like the divining games common to All-Hallowe'en. In this latter form, Ostróvsky has utilized it in his play, " Poverty is not a Sin," Act II, Scene v. The form referred to above is the stately one, and runs somewhat as follows: " Glory to God in heaven, *Glory!*—To our Lord on this earth, *Glory!*—May our Lord (the word used is *gosudár,* which, with a capital, means the Emperor), never grow old, *Glory!*—May his bright robes never be spoiled, *Glory!*—May his good steeds never be worn out, *Glory!*—May his trusty servants never falter, *Glory!*—May the right throughout Russia, *Glory!*—Be fairer than the bright Sun, *Glory!*—May the Tzar's golden treasury, *Glory!*—Be for ever full to the brim, *Glory!*—May the great rivers, *Glory!*—Bear their renown to the sea, *Glory!*—The little streams to the mill, *Glory!* "—Obviously, this can easily be adapted to any circumstances.—TRANSLATOR.

education. The more I observed Radíloff, the more did it seem to me that he belonged to the category of such people. He talked about farming, about the harvest, the mowing, about the war, about the county gossip and the approaching elections,[1] talked without constraint, even with interest, but suddenly he heaved a sigh, dropped into an arm-chair, like a man who is exhausted with heavy toil, and passed his hand over his face. His whole soul, kind and warm, seemed to be permeated through and through, saturated with one feeling. I had already been struck by the fact that I could not discern in him a passion either for eating, or for liquor, or for hunting, or for Kursk nightingales,[2] or for pigeons afflicted with epilepsy, or for Russian literature, or for pacers, or for hussar jackets, or for card-playing or billiards, or for dancing parties, or for paper-mills and beet-sugar factories, or for embellished arbours, or for tea, or for trace-horses trained to the degree of perversion,[3] or for fat coachmen girt directly under the armpits, for those magnificent coachmen, whose eyes—God knows why—twist asquint and

[1] For Marshal of Nobility; for the Government or district.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] The nightingales from the Kursk Government are reputed the finest in the country, and have several extra "turns" to their song.—TRANSLATOR.

[3] Meaning—the side horses in the tróïka or three-horse team, trained to gallop spread out like a fan from the central trotter, with heads held down and backwards, so that those in the equipage can see their eyes and nostrils—this in extremes.—TRANSLATOR.

fairly pop out of their heads at every movement of their necks. . . . "What sort of a country squire is he, I'd like to know!" I thought. And in the meantime, he put on no airs of being a gloomy man, and discontented with his lot; on the contrary, he fairly reeked with an atmosphere of unfastidious good-will, cordiality, and almost offensive readiness to be hail-fellow-well-met with every one who came along, without discrimination. It is true that, at the same time, you felt that he could not make friends, really become intimate, with any one whomsoever, and that he could not, not because he had no need of other people in general, but because his whole life had, for the time being, turned inward. As I intently observed Radíloff, I could not possibly imagine him to myself as happy, either now or at any other time. He was not a beauty, either; but in his glance, in his smile, in his whole being there was concealed something extremely attractive,—precisely that: concealed. So, apparently, one would have liked to know him better, to love him. Of course, the country squire, the steppe-dweller, was apparent in him at times; but, notwithstanding, he was a splendid fellow.

We had just begun to discuss the new Marshal of the Nobility for the district, when, all of a sudden, Olga's voice resounded at the door: "Tea is ready." We went to the drawing-room.

Feódor Mikhyéitch was sitting, as before, in his nook between the small window and the door, with his feet modestly tucked up. Radíloff's mother was knitting a stocking. Through the windows open toward the garden there wafted in the chill of autumn and a scent of apples. Olga was busily pouring out tea. I surveyed her now with greater attention than at dinner. She spoke very little, like all country maidens in general, but in her, at least, I did not observe any desire to say something fine, together with a torturing sense of emptiness and impotence; she did not sigh, as though from a superabundance of inexpressible sentiments, did not roll up her eyes, did not smile dreamily and indefinitely. Her gaze was calm and indifferent, like that of a person who is resting after a great happiness, or a great anxiety. Her walk, her movements, were decided and unconstrained. She pleased me greatly.

Radíloff and I got to talking again. I cannot now recall how we arrived at the familiar remark: how frequently the most insignificant things produce a greater impression than the most important.

"Yes,"—said Radíloff:—"I have had that experience myself. I have been married, as you know. Not long . . . . three years; my wife died in childbed. I thought that I should not survive her; I was frightfully afflicted, over-

whelmed, but I could not weep—I went about like a madman. They dressed her, in the usual way, and placed her on the table—here, in this room. The priest came; the chanters came, and they began to sing, to pray, to cense with incense; I made reverences to the earth, but not a tear did I shed. My heart seemed to have turned to stone, and my head also,—and I had grown heavy all over. Thus passed the first day. On the following morning I went to my wife,—it was in summer, the sun illumined her from head to feet, and so brilliantly.—All at once I saw . . . .” Here Radíloff involuntarily shuddered. . . “ what do you think? One of her eyes was not quite closed, and on that eye a fly was walking. . . . I fell to the floor in a heap, unconscious, and when I recovered my senses, I began to weep, to weep,—I could not stop. . . .”

Radíloff relapsed into silence. I looked at him, then at Olga. . . . I shall never forget the expression of her face as long as I live. The old lady dropped the stocking on her knees, pulled a handkerchief from her reticule, and stealthily wiped away a tear. Feódor Mikhyéitch suddenly rose to his feet, seized his fiddle, and started a song in a hoarse, wild voice. He probably wished to cheer us up; but we all shuddered at his first sound, and Radíloff requested him to be quiet.

“ However,”—he went on:—“ what has hap-

pened, has happened; the past cannot be recalled, and, after all . . . . everything is for the best in this world, as Voltaire—I think it was—once said," he added hastily.

"Yes,"—I returned:—"of course. Besides, every misfortune may be borne, and there is no situation so bad, but that one can escape from it."

"Do you think so?"—remarked Radíloff.—"Well, perhaps you are right. I remember lying half-dead in the hospital in Turkey: I had putrid fever. Well, our quarters were nothing to brag of—of course, it was war-time,—and we thanked God for even that much! All of a sudden, more patients were brought to us,—where were they to be put? The doctor rushed hither and thither: there was no room. At last he came up to me, and asked the assistant: 'Is he alive?' The man answered: 'He was this morning.' The doctor bent over me, listening: I was breathing. My friend lost patience. 'Well, he has got a stupid sort of nature,'—said he:—'why, the man will die, he will infallibly die, and he keeps creaking on, dragging along; he merely takes up space, and interferes with others.' Well, I thought to myself, thou art in a bad way, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch. . . . And behold, I got well and am alive at the present moment, as you may see. So, you must be right."

"I am right, in any case,"—I replied:—"even

if you had died, you would have escaped from your evil state."

"Of course, of course,"—he added,—dealing the table a heavy blow with his hand. . . . "All that is required, is to make up one's mind. . . . . What 's the sense of enduring a bad situation? . . . . Why delay, drag matters out? . . ."

Olga rose swiftly and went out into the garden.

"Come, now, Fédya, a dance-tune,"—exclaimed Radíloff.

Fédya leaped to his feet, strode about the room with that peculiar dandified gait wherewith the familiar "goat" treads around the tame bear, and struck up: "When at our gate . . . ."

The rumble of a racing-gig resounded at the entrance, and a few moments later there came into the room an old man of lofty stature, broad-shouldered and heavily-built, freeholder Ovsyánikoff. . . . But Ovsyánikoff is so remarkable and original a person, that, with the reader's permission, we will discuss him in another excerpt. But now, I will merely add, on my account, that on the following day Ermolái and I set off a-hunting as soon as it was light, and from the hunt went home; . . . that a week later, I ran in to see Radíloff, but found neither him nor Olga at home, and two weeks afterward learned that he had suddenly disappeared, abandoned his mother, and gone off somewhere or

other with his sister-in-law. The whole government was in commotion, and gossiping about this occurrence, and only then, at last, did I understand the expression of Olga's face during Radíloff's story. It had not breathed forth compassion alone then: it had also flamed with jealousy.

Before my departure from the country I called on old Mme. Radíloff. I found her in the drawing-room; she was playing "fool" with Feódor Mikhyéitch.

"Have you any news from your son?"—I asked her at last.

The old lady began to weep. I questioned her no further about Radíloff.[1]

[1] Marriage with a sister-in-law is prohibited in the Eastern Catholic Church. Two brothers may not even wed two sisters.—TRANSLATOR.

VI

FREEHOLDER OVSYÁNIKOFF[1]

PICTURE to yourselves, dear readers, a stout, tall man, seventy years of age, with a face somewhat suggestive of that of Krylóff,[2] with a clear and intelligent gaze, beneath overhanging eyebrows: with a stately mien, deliberate speech, slow gait; there is Ovsyánikoff for you. He wore a capacious blue surtout with long sleeves, a lilac silk kerchief round his neck, brightly-polished boots with tassels, and, altogether, resembled a well-to-do merchant. His hands were very handsome, soft and white; in the course of conversation, he frequently fingered a button of his coat. Ovsyánikoff, by his dignity and impassiveness, his intelligence and laziness, his straightforwardness and stubbornness, reminded me of the Russian

[1] The "freeholders" constitute a peculiar intermediate class, neither gentry nor peasants. They are: 1. Settlers who regard themselves of noble lineage, and, in some cases, formerly owned serfs. 2. Descendants of nobles of the court service and of military men who were colonised in the Ukráina (Border-Marches) in the XVIIth century. They are found chiefly in the governments of Tambóff, Vorónezh, and neighbouring governments, once the Border-Marches.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] Iván Andréevitch Krylóff (1763–1844), the famous Russian fabulist.—TRANSLATOR.

boyárs of the times anterior to Peter the Great: . . . . the féryaz[1] would have suited his style. He was one of the last survivors of the olden days. All his neighbours respected him extremely, and regarded it as an honour to know him. His brother freeholders all but said their prayers to him, doffed their caps to him from afar, were proud of him. Generally speaking, to this day, we find it difficult to distinguish a freeholder from a peasant: his farming-operations are almost worse than those of a peasant, his calves are forever in the buckwheat fields, his horses are barely alive, his harness is of ropes. Ovsyánikoff was an exception to the general rule, although he was not reputed to be wealthy. He lived alone with his wife, in a snug, neat little house, kept only a small staff of servants, clothed his people in Russian style, and called them labourers. And they really tilled his land. He did not claim to be a nobleman, he did not pretend to be a landed proprietor, he never, as the saying is, "forgot himself," he did not seat himself at the first invitation, and at the entrance of a new visitor he invariably rose from his seat, but with so much dignity, with so much majestic courtesy, that the visitor involuntarily saluted him the more profoundly. Ovsyánikoff held to ancient customs not out of superstition (he had a fairly

[1] An ancient, long-skirted coat, with long sleeves, no collar, and no defined waist-line.—TRANSLATOR.

liberal soul), but from habit. For example, he did not like equipages with springs, because he did not find them comfortable, and drove about either in a racing-gig, or in a small, handsome cart with a leather cushion, and himself held the reins over a good bay trotter. (He kept only bay horses.) The coachman, a rosy-cheeked young fellow, with his hair cut in a bowl-shaped crop, clad in a bluish long coat and a low sheepskin cap, and with a strap for a girdle, sat respectfully by his side. Ovsyánikoff always slept after dinner, went to the bath on Saturdays, read only religious books (on which occasions he pompously set a pair of silver-mounted spectacles astride of his nose), rose and went to bed early. But he shaved off his beard, and wore his hair in foreign fashion. He welcomed visitors with much affection and cordiality, but did not bow to their girdles, did not fuss, did not treat them to all sorts of dried and salted viands.—"Wife!" he would say deliberately, without rising from his seat, and turning his head slightly in her direction:—"Fetch the gentlemen some dainty morsel or other." He regarded it as a sin to sell grain, the gift of God, and in the year 1840, at a time of general famine and frightfully high prices, he distributed his entire store to the neighbouring landed proprietors and peasants; in the following year, they repaid their debt to him in kind, with gratitude. The neigh-

bours frequently resorted to Ovsyánikoff with appeals to arbitrate, to effect reconciliations between them, and almost always submitted to his decree, obeyed his advice. Many, thanks to him, got the boundaries of their land definitely settled. . . . . But after two or three skirmishes with landed proprietresses, he announced that he declined any sort of intervention between persons of the female sex. He could not endure haste, agitated precipitation, women's chatter and "fussiness." Once it happened that his house caught fire. A labourer rushed precipitately to him, yelling: "Fire! Fire!"—"Well, what art thou yelling for?" said Ovsyánikoff, calmly:—"Give me my hat and staff."—He was fond of breaking in his horses for himself. One day, a mettlesome Bitiúk [1] dashed headlong down-hill with him, toward a precipice. "Come, that will do, that will do, thou green colt,—thou wilt kill thyself," Ovsyánikoff remarked good-naturedly to him, and a moment later flew over the precipice, along with his racing-drozhky, the small lad who was sitting behind, and the horse. Luckily, the sand lay in heaps at the bottom of the ravine. No one was injured, but the Bitiúk dislocated his leg.—"Well, there, thou seest,"—went on Ovsyánikoff in a calm voice, as he rose

[1] "Bitiúks"—horses from Bitiúk; a special race, which were reared in the Government of Vorónezh, near the well-known "Khryenovóy" (the former stud-farm of Count Orlóff).—TRANSLATOR.

from the ground:—"I told thee so."—And he had found himself a wife to match him. Tatyána Ilínitchna Ovsyánikoff was a woman of lofty stature, dignified and taciturn, with a cinnamon-brown silk kerchief forever bound about her head. She exhaled a chilly atmosphere, although not only did no one accuse her of being severe, but, on the contrary, many poor wretches called her "dear little mother" and "benefactress." Regular features, large, dark eyes, thin lips, still bore witness to her formerly renowned beauty. Ovsyánikoff had no children.

I made his acquaintance, as the reader already is aware, at Radíloff's, and a couple of days later I went to see him. I found him at home. He was sitting in a large leathern arm-chair, and reading the Tchetyá-Mináya.[1] A grey cat was purring on his shoulder. He welcomed me, according to his wont, caressingly and in stately wise. We entered into conversation.

"But pray tell me truly, Luká Petróvitch,"—I said, among other things;—"Things were better formerly, in your time, were n't they?"

"Some things really were better, I will tell you,"—returned Ovsyánikoff:—"We lived more peacefully; there was greater ease, really. . . . But, nevertheless, things are better now; and they will be better still for our children, God willing."

[1] "The Martyrology," or Lives of the Saints.—TRANSLATOR.

"But I expected, Luká Petróvitch, that you would laud the olden days to me."

"No, I have no special cause to laud the olden times. Here, now, to give an instance, you are a landed proprietor at the present day, just such a landed proprietor as your deceased grandfather was before you, but you will never have the power he had! and you are not the same sort of a man, either. Other gentlemen oppress us nowadays; but, evidently, that cannot be dispensed with. You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs. No, I no longer see what I used to wonder at in my youth."

"And what was that, for example?"

"Why, take this now, for instance, I will refer to your grandfather once more. He was an overbearing man! he wronged folks like me. Now, perhaps you know—and how can you help knowing about your land?—that wedge which runs from Tcheplýgino to Malínino; . . . . . You have it planted to oats now. . . . Well, that's ours, you know,—every bit of it ours. Your grandfather took it away from us; he rode out on horseback, pointed it out with his hand, said: "My property,"—and took possession of it. My father, now dead (the kingdom of heaven be his!), was a just man, but he was also a hot-tempered man, and he would not put up with that,—and who does like to lose his property?—and he appealed to the court of law. One

judge gave it to him, but the others did not agree, —they were afraid. So they reported to your grandfather to the effect that 'Piótr Ovsyánikoff is making a complaint against you; he says you have been pleased to deprive him of his land.' . . . . Your grandfather immediately sent his huntsman Bausch to us, with a squad. . . . So they took my father and carried him off to your hereditary estate. I was a little lad then, and ran after them, barefooted. What next? . . . . They took him to your house, and flogged him in front of the windows. And your grandfather stood on the balcony, and looked on; and your grandmother sat at the window and looked on also. My father shouts: 'Dear little mother, Márya Vasílievna, intercede! Do you, at least, spare me!' But all she did was to keep rising up, now and then, and taking a look. So then they made my father promise to retire from the land, and they ordered him to return thanks, to boot, that they had let him go alive. And so it has remained in your possession. Just go and ask your own peasants: 'What is that land called?' The land of the oaken cudgel[1] it is called, because it was taken away by an oaken cudgel. And that is why it is impossible for us, the petty people, very greatly to regret the ancient order of things."

I did not know what reply to make to Ovsyánikoff, and did not dare to look him in the face.

[1] *Dubovshstchína,* in Russian.—TRANSLATOR.

"And then take another of our neighbours, who made his nest among us in those days,—Kómoff, Stepán Niktopoliónitch. He tormented my father to death: if not with biting, with scratching. He was a drunken fellow, and fond of standing treat, and when he had taken a glass too much, he would say in French, 'C'est bon,' and carry on so, that it was enough to make one want to take the holy pictures out of the room, with shame! He would send and invite all the neighbours to favour him with their company. He had tróïkas standing ready harnessed; and if you did n't come, he 'd drop down on you himself. . . . And such a strange man as he was! When he was sober, he did not lie; but as soon as he began to drink he would begin to relate that in Peter[1] he had three houses on the Fontánka: one red, with one chimney; another yellow, with two chimneys; and the third blue, with no chimney,—and three sons (but he was not married): one in the infantry, one in the cavalry, and the third a gentleman of leisure. . . . And, he said, that in each of his houses dwelt one of his sons; that admirals came to visit the eldest, generals to visit the second, and nothing but Englishmen to visit the third! Well, and he would rise to his feet and say: 'To the health of my eldest son, he 's the most respectful!'—and begin to weep. And woe be

[1] Petersburg.—TRANSLATOR.

to the man who undertook to refuse! 'I 'll shoot him,'—he would say: 'and I won't allow him to be buried!' . . . . Or he would spring up and begin to shout: 'Dance, ye people of God, for your own amusement and my consolation!' Well, you 'd dance, though you might die for it, you 'd dance. He utterly wore out his serf girls. They used to sing in chorus all night long until the morning, and the one who raised her voice the highest got a reward. And if they began to tire, he would drop his head on his hands, and begin to grieve: 'Okh, an orphaned orphan am I! they are abandoning me, the dear little doves!' Then the stablemen would immediately administer a little encouragement to the girls. He took a fancy to my father: how could one help that? He almost drove my father into his grave, you know; and he really would have driven him into it, had he not died himself, thank the Lord: he tumbled headlong from the pigeon-house, in a drunken fit. . . . So that 's the sort of nice neighbours we used to have!"

"How times have changed!"—I remarked.

"Yes, yes,"—assented Ovsyánikoff. . . . "Well, and there 's this to be said: in the olden days, the nobles really lived more sumptuously. Not to mention the grandees: I had a chance to admire them in Moscow. 'T is said they have now died out there also."

"Have you been in Moscow?"

"Yes, long ago, very long ago. I 'm now in my seventy-third year, and I travelled to Moscow when I was sixteen."

Ovsyánikoff heaved a sigh.

"And whom did you see there?"

"Why, I saw a great many grandees—and everybody saw them: they lived openly, gloriously, and amazingly. Only, not one of them equalled Count Alexyéi Grigórievitch Orlóff-Tchesménsky.[1] I used to see Alexyéi Grigórievitch frequently: my uncle served him as major-domo. The Count deigned to live at the Kalúga Gate, on Sháblovka street. There was a grandee for you! It is impossible to imagine to one's self such an imposing carriage, such gracious courtesy, and impossible to describe it. What was not his stature alone worth, his strength, his glance! Until you knew him, you would n't enter his house—you 'd be afraid, regularly intimidated; but if you did go in, you felt as though the sun were warming you, and you 'd get cheerful all through. He admitted every one to his presence, and was fond of everything. At races he drove himself, and would race with anybody; and he would never overtake them all at once, he would n't hurt their feelings, he would n't cut

[1] One of Katherine II's favourites, who won his title of "Tchesménsky" by his victory over the Turkish fleet at Tchesmé in 1769. A silver dinner-plate which he twisted into a roll with his fingers is preserved in the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.—TRANSLATOR.

them off short, but probably he would pass them just at the end; and he was so caressing,—he would comfort his adversary, praise his horse. He kept first-class tumbler pigeons. He used to come out into the courtyard, seat himself in an arm-chair, and order them to set the pigeons flying; and all around, on the roofs, stood men with guns, to ward off the hawks. A big silver vase of water was placed at the Count's feet; and he would look into the water and watch the pigeons. The poor and the needy lived on his bread by the hundred . . . and how much money he gave away! But when he got angry, it was like the thunder roaring. A great alarm, but nothing to cry about: the first you knew,—he would be smiling. He would give a feast,—and furnish drink for all Moscow! . . . . and what a clever man he was! he conquered the Turk, you know. He was fond of wrestling, too; they brought strong men to him from Túla, from Khárkoff, from Tambóff, from everywhere. If he overcame a man, he would reward him; but if any one conquered him, he would load that man with gifts, and kiss him on the lips. . . . And during my stay in Moscow, he organised such a hare-hunt as never was seen in Russia; he invited all the sportsmen in the whole empire to be his guests, and appointed a day three months ahead. Well, and so they assembled. They brought dogs, huntsmen,—well, an army arrived,

a regular army! First they feasted, as was proper, and then they set off for the barrier. An innumerable throng of people had collected. . . . . And what do you think? . . . . Why, your grandfather's dog outran them all."

"Was n't it Milovídka?"[1] I asked.

"Yes, Milovídka. . . . So, the Count began to entreat him: 'Sell me thy dog,' says he: 'ask what price thou wilt.'—'No, Count,' says he, 'I 'm not a merchant: I don't sell useless rags, and for the sake of honour, I 'm even willing to surrender my wife, only not Milovídka. . . . . I 'll surrender myself as a prisoner first.' And Alexyéi Grigórievitch praised him: 'I like that,' says he. And he drove your grandfather back in his own carriage; and when Milovídka died, they buried her in the garden with music,—they buried the bitch, and placed a stone with an inscription on it over the bitch's grave."

"Why, so Alexyéi Grigórievitch really never did offend any one,"—I remarked.

"Yes, he was always like that: the man who is sailing in shallow water himself is the one who picks quarrels."

"And what sort of a man was that Bausch?"—I asked, after a brief pause.

"How is it that you have heard about Milovídka, and not about Bausch? . . . . He was the head huntsman and whipper-in of your

[1] From *miliy*, pretty, and *vid*, aspect.—TRANSLATOR.

grandfather. Your grandfather loved him no less than he did Milovídka. He was a desperado, and no matter what your grandfather ordered, he executed it in the twinkling of an eye, even if it was to hurl himself on a knife. . . . . And when he halloed on the hounds, it was as though a groan filled the forest. And all of a sudden, he would get a fit of obstinacy, and alight from his horse, and lie down. . . . And just as soon as the hounds ceased to hear his voice, it was all over! They would abandon a hot scent, they would n't continue the chase, on any terms whatsoever. I-ikh, how angry your grandfather used to get! 'I 'll turn thee wrong side out, thou antichrist! I 'll pull thy heels out through thy throat, thou soul-ruiner!' And it would end in his sending to inquire what he wanted, why he was not uttering the halloo! And in such cases, Bausch would generally demand liquor, would drink it off, get up, and begin to whoop again magnificently."

"You seem to be fond of hunting also, Luká Petróvitch?"

"I would have liked it . . . . that 's a fact, but not now: now my day is over,—but in my youth . . . . and, you know, it 's awkward, because of my rank. It is n't proper for the like of me to try to imitate the nobles. That 's the truth of it: one man of our class—a drunkard and incapable—used to tag on to the gentry . . . .

but what pleasure is there in that! You only put yourself to shame. They gave him a miserable, stumbling horse; and they kept picking off his cap and flinging it on the ground; they would strike him with their hunting-whips, as though he were a horse; and he would laugh all the while himself, and make the others laugh. No, I tell you: the smaller the rank, the more rigidly must you behave, otherwise, the first thing you know, you will be disgracing yourself."

"Yes,"—pursued Ovsyánikoff, with a sigh,—"much water has flowed past since I have lived in the world: other days have arrived. Especially in the nobles do I perceive a great change. The petty gentry have all either entered the government service, or else they don't stay still in one place; and as for the greater estate-owners, they are unrecognisable. I have had a good look at them, at the big men, in connection with the delimitation of boundaries. And I must tell you, my heart rejoices as I look at them: they are affable, polite. Only this is what surprises me: they have all studied the sciences, they talk so fluently that your soul is moved within you, but they don't understand real business, they are n't even awake to their own advantage: why, a serf, their manager, can drive them whithersoever he pleases, like a slave. Here now, for example, perhaps you are acquainted with Korolyóff, Alexander Vladímirovitch,—

is n't he a regular noble? A beauty, rich, educated at the ' 'niversity,' I believe, and has been abroad, talks fluently, modestly, shakes hands with all of us. You do know him? . . . . well, then hearken to me. Last week, we assembled at Beryózovka, on the invitation of the arbitrator, Nikifór Ilitch. And the arbitrator, Nikifór Ilitch, says to us: ' Gentlemen, we must fix the boundaries; 't is a shame that our section has lagged behind all the rest; let 's get to work.' So we set to work. Discussions and disputes began, as is usual; our attorney began to put on airs. But Porfíry Ovtchínnikoff was the first to make a row. . . . And on what ground does the man make a row? He does n't own an inch of land himself: he manages it on behalf of his brother. He shouts: ' No! you can't cheat me! no, you 've got hold of the wrong man! hand over the plans, give me the surveyor, the seller of Christ, hand him over to me! '—' But what is your claim? '—' So you think you 've caught a fool, forsooth! have n't I just announced my demands to you? . . . no, you just hand over those plans,—so there now! ' And he is thwacking the plans with his hand the while. He dealt a deadly insult to Márfa Dmítrievna. She shrieks: ' How dare you sully my reputation? '—' I,'—says he, ' would n't want my brown mare to have your reputation.' They administered some madeira to him by force. They got him quieted down,

—and others began to make a rumpus. Alexánder Vladímiritch Korolyóff, my dear little dove, sits in a corner, nibbling at the knob of his cane, and merely shaking his head. I felt ashamed, 't was more than I could endure, I wanted to flee from the room. 'What does the man think of us?' I said to myself. And behold, my Alexánder Vladímiritch rises, shows that he wishes to speak. The arbitrator begins to fuss, says: 'Gentlemen, gentlemen, Alexánder Vladímiritch wants to speak.' And one can't help praising the nobles: all of them immediately became silent. So Alexánder Vladímiritch began and said: 'We appear to have forgotten the object for which we have come together; although the delimitation of boundaries is, indisputably, advantageous for the proprietors, yet in reality, it is established for what purpose?—it is for the purpose of making things easier for the peasant, so that he can toil and discharge his obligations the more conveniently; but as things stand now, he does not know even which land is his, and not infrequently has to travel five versts to till the soil, —and he cannot be held to account.' Then Alexánder Vladímiritch said that it was a sin for a landed proprietor not to look out for the welfare of the peasants; that, in short, the sensible way of viewing the matter was, that their advantage and our advantage are identical: if they are well off, we are well off, if they are in evil plight, so

are we; . . . . and that, consequently, 't is a sin and foolish to fail of agreement because of trifles. . . . And he went on, and on. . . . And how he did talk! It fairly gripped your soul. . . . And all the nobles hung their heads, I myself was on the very verge of melting into tears. 'T is a fact, that there are no such speeches in the ancient books. . . . And what came of it? He himself would n't surrender four desyatínas of moss-bog, and would n't sell it either. Says he: 'I 'll have my men drain that swamp, and I 'll set up—I 'll set up a cloth-mill on it, with improvements. I,' says he, 'have already selected that location: I have my own calculations on that score. . . And if it had only been just! But the simple facts in the case were,—that Alexánder Vladímiritch's neighbour, Antón Karásikoff, had been too stingy to bribe Alexánder Vladímiritch's manager with a hundred rubles. So we parted without having accomplished any business. And Alexánder Vladímiritch considers himself to be in the right up to the present time, and keeps babbling idly about a cloth-mill, but he does n't set about draining the bog."

"And how does he manage his estate?"

"He is all the time introducing new-fangled notions. The peasants don't approve of them,—but there 's no use in paying any attention to them. Alexánder Vladímiritch is acting rightly."

"How so, Luká Petróvitch? I thought you clung to the old ways."

"I—am quite a different matter. I 'm not a noble, you see, nor a landed proprietor. What does my farming amount to? . . . . And I don't know any different way, either. I try to act according to justice and the law,—and that 's all a man can do. The young gentlemen don't like the former ways: I applaud them. . .'T is time to use their brains. Only, there 's this sad point about it: the young gentlemen are awfully subtle. They treat the peasants as though they were dolls: turn them this way and that, break them and cast them aside. And the manager, a serf, or the steward, of German parentage, gets the peasants into his claws again. And if one of the young gentlemen would only set an example, would demonstrate: 'This is the way things should be managed!' . . . . But what is to be the end of it? Is it possible that I shall die without having beheld the new order of things? . . . Why is it? the old has died out, and the new does not prosper!"

I did not know how to answer Ovsyánikoff. He cast a glance about, moved closer to me, and continued, in an undertone:

"Have you heard about Vasíly Nikoláitch Liubozvónoff?"

"No, I have not."

"Please to explain to me what sort of marvels

are these. I am utterly at a loss to understand. Why, his own peasants told the tale, but I will not take their speeches into account. He 's a young man, you know, who came into his inheritance not long ago, at his mother's death. Well, and he comes to his patrimonial estate. The peasants have assembled to have a look at their master. Vasíly Nikoláitch comes out to them. The peasants look, and—amazing to relate!—the master is wearing velveteen trousers as though he were a coachman, and has donned short boots with fancy tops; he has put on a red shirt, and a coachman's kaftan also; he has let his beard grow, and has such a queer little cap on his head, and his face is queer too,—not precisely drunk, but as though he were out of his wits. 'Good day, my lads!'[1] says he: 'Good luck to you!'[2] The peasants make him a reverence to the girdle, —but in silence: they had got frightened, you know. And he himself seemed to be timid. He began to make a speech:

"'I 'm a Russian,' says he, 'and you are Russians too; I love everything Russian. . . . . I have a Russian soul,' says he, 'and my blood is Russian also.' . . . . And all of a sudden, as though it were a command: 'Come now, my

[1] Literally: "Health, my lads!" The official greeting of an officer to his soldiers, to which there is an official reply.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] Literally: "God be your helper." The customary greeting to any peasant one may meet.—TRANSLATOR.

children, sing a Russian folk-song!' The peasants' hamstrings began to tremble; they turned utterly stupid. One bold lad tried to strike up a tune, but immediately squatted down on the ground, hid himself behind the rest. . . . . And there was cause for amazement: there used to be among us landed proprietors, desperate fellows, arrant rakes, to tell the truth: they dressed almost like coachmen, and danced themselves,[1] played on the guitar, sang and drank with the worthless house-serfs, feasted with the peasants; but this Vasíly Nikoláitch, you see, is just like a handsome girl: he 's always reading books, or writing, when he is n't declaiming verses aloud,—he never converses with any one, he holds himself aloof, he 's forever strolling in the garden, as though he were bored or sad. The former manager was thoroughly intimidated, at first; before the arrival of Vasíly Nikoláitch, he made the rounds of all the peasants' houses, made obeisance to everybody,—evidently, the cat knew whose meat he had eaten,—that he was in fault! And the peasants cherished hopes; they thought: 'Fiddlesticks, brother!—thou wilt soon be called to account, dear little dove; thou wilt soon be weeping thy fill, thou extortioner!' . . . . But it turned out instead,—how shall I announce it to you!

[1] The view taken of dancing, in olden days, in Russia was—that it was derogatory to the dignity of gentlefolks; something to be performed for them by their serfs, or paid inferiors.—TRANSLATOR.

The Lord Himself could n't make head or tail of what happened! Vasíly Nikoláitch summoned him to his presence, and says to him, flushing scarlet himself the while, and breathing fast—so, you know: 'Be just, don't oppress any one on my estate,—dost thou hear?' And from that day forth, he has never ordered him to appear before him! He lives on his own paternal estate, as though he were a stranger. Well, and the overseer breathed freely and enjoyed himself; but the peasants don't dare to approach Vasíly Nikoláitch: they 're afraid. And, you see, here 's another thing which is deserving of surprise: the master bows to them, and looks courteous,—but their bellies fairly ache with fright. Now, what sort of queer goings-on do you say these are, dear little father? . . . . Either I have become stupid, or grown old,—but I don't understand."

I answered Ovsyánikoff, that, in all probability, Mr. Liubozvónoff was ill.

"Ill, indeed! He 's thicker through than I am, and his face, God be with him, is very big around, in spite of his youth. . . . However, the Lord knows!" (And Ovsyánikoff heaved a deep sigh.)

"Well, setting aside the nobles,"—I began:—"What have you to say to me about the freeholders, Luká Petróvitch?"

"No, you must excuse me from that,"—he

said hastily:—" really . . . I would tell you . . . but what 's the use!" (Ovsyánikoff waved the subject aside with his hand.) "We 'd better drink tea. . . . Peasants, downright peasants; nevertheless, to tell the truth, what are we to do?"

He fell silent. Tea was served. Tatyána Ilínitchna rose from her place and seated herself nearer to us. During the course of the evening, she had noiselessly left the room several times, and as noiselessly returned. Silence reigned in the room. Ovsyánikoff drank cup after cup, in a slow and stately way.

" Mítya was here to-day,"—remarked Tatyána Ilínitchna in an undertone.

Ovsyánikoff frowned.

" What does he want?"

" He came to ask forgiveness."

Ovsyánikoff shook his head.

" Now, just look at that,"—he continued, addressing me:—" what ought a man to do about his relatives? 'T is impossible to renounce them. . . Here now, God has rewarded me with a nephew. He 's a young fellow with brains, a dashing young fellow, there's no disputing that; he studied well, only, I can't expect to get any good of him. . . He was in the government service—he abandoned the service: you see, he had no chance of promotion. . . . Was he a noble? And even nobles don't get to be generals instantaneously. And so, now he is living in idleness.

. . . And that might pass,—but he has turned into a pettifogger! He composes petitions for the peasants, writes reports, teaches the rural policemen, shows up the surveyors for what they are, lounges about the dram-shops, picks up acquaintance at the posting-houses with petty burghers from the town, and with yard-porters. Is n't a catastrophe imminent? And the captain and commissary of the rural police have already threatened him. But he, luckily, knows how to jest, he makes them laugh, and then, afterward, he 'll stir up a mess for them. . . . Come now, is n't he sitting in thy chamber?" . . he added, turning to his wife:—" I know thy ways: thou art such a tender-hearted creature,—thou showest him thy protection."

Tatyána Ilínitchna dropped her eyes and blushed.

" Come, that 's how it is,"—went on Ovsyánikoff. . . . " Okh, thou spoiler! Well, order him to come in,—so be it, for the sake of our dear guest, I will forgive the stupid fellow. . . Come, order him in, order him in. . . . ."

Tatyána Ilínitchna went to the door and called out: " Mítya! "

Mítya, a young fellow of eight and twenty years, tall, finely built, and curly-haired, entered the room, and, catching sight of me, halted on the threshold. His clothing was of foreign cut, but the unnatural size of the puffs on the shoulders

were sufficient proof in themselves that it had been made not only by a Russian tailor, but by a Russian of the Russians.

"Well, come on, come on,"—said the old man: "of what art thou ashamed? Thank thy aunt: thou art forgiven. . . Here, dear little father, let me introduce him,"—he went on, pointing to Mítya:—"he 's my own blood nephew, but I shall never be able to get on with him. The end of the world has come!" (We bowed to each other.) "Come, speak up, what sort of a scrape hast thou got into yonder? What are they complaining about thee for! Tell us?"

Mítya, evidently, did not wish to explain and defend himself before me.

"Afterward, uncle,"—he muttered.

"No, not afterward, but now,"—went on the old man. . . . "I know that thou art ashamed before the noble squire: so much the better, punish thyself. Pray, be so good as to speak out. . . . We are listening."

"I have no reason to feel ashamed,"—began Mítya, with vivacity, and shook his head.—"Pray judge for yourself, dear uncle. The Ryeshetílovo freeholders come to me and say: 'Defend us, brother.'—'What do you want?'—'Why, this: our grain warehouses are in accurate order,—that is to say, nothing could be better; all at once, an official comes in: "I have orders to inspect the warehouses." He inspected them, and

says: "Your warehouses are in disorder, there are important omissions, I am bound to report to the authorities."—"Why, wherein consist the omissions?"—"I know what they are," says he. . . . . We came together, and decided to thank the official in proper fashion,—but old Prokhóritch interfered; says he: "In that way, you 'll only whet his appetite for more. Well, really now, have n't we any rights?"—So we heeded the old man, but the official flew into a rage, and made a complaint, wrote a report."—'But were your warehouses really in proper order?' I asked.—'As God sees me, they were in order and we have the legal quantity of grain. . . .' 'Well,' said I, 'then there 's no cause for you to fear,' and I wrote the document for them. . . . . And no one yet knows in whose favour it will be decided. . . . And as for people having complained to you about me in this connection,—that is easy to understand: everybody looks out for number one."

"Everybody else,—only, evidently, not thou,"—said the old man in an undertone. . . . . "And what sort of intrigues hast thou been engaging in, with the Shutolómovo peasants?"

"How do you know about that?"

"I do know.

"I was in the right there also,—please judge for yourself again. Bezpándin, a neighbour of the Shutolómovo peasants, ploughed four desya-

tínas of land. 'The land is mine,' said he. The Shutolómovo men are on quit-rent, their squire has gone abroad,—judge for yourself,—who is there to stand up for them? But the land is theirs, indisputably, has belonged to the serfs since time immemorial. So they come to me, and say: 'Write a petition.' And I wrote it. But Bezpándin heard about it, and began to make threats: 'I 'll pull that Mítka's shoulder-blades out of their sockets,' says he, 'if I don't tear his head clean off his shoulders. . . .' Let 's see how he 'll tear it off: it 's whole up to the present moment."

"Well, don't boast; thy head 's of no use to thee,"—remarked the old man:—"thou art a downright crazy man!"

"But, uncle, was n't it you yourself who said to me . . . . ."

"I know, I know what thou art going to say to me,"—Ovsyánikoff interrupted him;—"exactly so: a man should live according to justice, and is bound to aid his neighbour. There are times when he should not even spare himself. . . But dost thou always act in that manner? Don't folks lead thee to the dram-shop? don't they treat thee to drinks? don't they pay thee respect? 'Dmítry Alexyéitch, dear little father,' say they, 'help us, and we will show thee our gratitude,'—and thrust a ruble or a blue bank-note into thy hand under their coat-tails? Hey? Is n't that

what happens? Tell me, is n't that the way of it?"

"In that respect, I really am guilty,"—replied Mítya, dropping his eyes,—"but I take nothing from the poor, and don't act against my conscience."

"Thou dost not take now, but when thou findest thyself in evil state,—thou wilt take. Thou dost not act against thy conscience . . . . ekh, shame on thee! Thou always upholdest saints, that means!—But hast thou forgotten Bórka[1] Perekhódoff? . . . Who bustled about on his behalf? Who lent him protection? Hey?"

"Perekhódoff suffered through his own fault, 't is true." . . .

"He spent the government money. . . . A nice joke that!"

"But just consider, dear uncle: poverty, a family. . . . ."

"Poverty, poverty. . . He 's a drinking man, a hard drinker; . . . that 's what he is!"

"He took to drink from misery,"—remarked Mítya, lowering his voice.

"From misery! Well, thou mightest have helped him, if thy heart is so warm, but thou mightest have refrained from sitting in the dramshop with a drunken man thyself. That he talks eloquently,—much of a rarity that is, forsooth!"

"He 's the kindest man possible. . . . ."

"Everybody 's kind, according to thee. . . . . .

[1] The disrespectful diminutive of Borís.—Translator.

Anyhow,"—continued Ovsyánikoff, addressing his wife:—" they have sent him off . . . . well, yonder, thou knowest whither." . . . .

Tatyána Ilínitchna nodded her head.

" Where hast thou disappeared to these days? "—began the old man again.

" I have been in the town."

" I suppose thou hast been playing billiards all the while, and guzzling tea, and twanging on the guitar, and slipping stealthily through the public offices, concocting petitions in back rooms, and showing thyself off in great style with the young merchants? That 's so, is n't it? . . . . Tell me! "

" Probably it is,"—said Mítya, with a smile. . . " Akh, yes! I came near forgetting: Fúntikoff, Antón Parfénitch, invites you to dine with him on Sunday."

" I won't go to that big-bellied fellow's house. He 'll serve us with fish worth a hundred rubles, and prepared with tainted butter. I 'll have nothing whatever to do with him! "

" By the way, I met Fedósya Mikhaílovna."

" What Fedósya is that? "

" Why, the one who belongs to Squire Garpéntchenko, you know, who bought Mikúlino at *suction*.[1] Fedósya is from Mikúlino. She lives in Moscow as a seamstress, and paid quit-rent, one hundred and eighty-two rubles a year. . . . And she knows her business: she received fine

[1] Auction.—Translator.

orders in Moscow. But now, Garpéntchenko has ordered her back, and is keeping her here idle, and assigns her no duties. She is ready to purchase her freedom, and has told her master so, but he announces no decision. You are acquainted with Garpéntchenko, uncle,—so could n't you speak just a little word to him? And Fedósya will pay a good ransom."

"Not out of thy money, is it? Well, well, all right, all right, I 'll speak to him. Only, I don't know,"—went on the old man, with a displeased countenance:—"that Garpéntchenko,[1] Lord forgive him, is an extortioner: he buys in notes, lends at usurious interest, acquires estates under the hammer. . . . . And who brought him to our parts? Okh, how I detest these newcomers! It won't be a short matter to get any satisfaction from him;—however, we shall see."

"Use your efforts, uncle."

"Good! I will. Only, see here now, mind what I say! Come, come, don't defend thyself. . . . God bless thee, God bless thee! . . . Only, hereafter, look out, or, by heaven, Mítya, 't will be the worse for thee,—thou wilt come to grief, by heaven, thou wilt! . . . I can't carry thee on my shoulders forever. . . . I 'm not an influential man myself. Now go, with God's blessing."

[1] Evidently, from his name, ending in *enko,* the man was a Little Russian, whose compatriots bear in Russia the reputation of being as "canny" as the Scotch in England, or as "sharp" as the Yankees in America.—TRANSLATOR.

Mítya left the room. Tatyána Ilínitchna followed him.

"Give him some tea, thou child-spoiler,"—shouted Ovsyánikoff after her. . . . . "He 's not a stupid young fellow," he went on:—"and he has a kind soul, only, I 'm afraid for him. . . . But pardon me, for having taken up so much of your time with trifles."

The door into the anteroom opened. There entered a short, greyish-haired man, in a velvet coat.

"Ah, Franz Ivánitch!"—exclaimed Ovsyánikoff:—"good morning, what mercies does God show to you?"

Permit me, amiable reader, to make you acquainted with this gentleman also.

Franz Ivánitch Lejeune, my neighbour and a landed proprietor of Orel, attained to the honourable rank of a Russian noble in manner not entirely usual. He was born in Orléans, of French parents, and set off in company with Napoleon to conquer Russia, in the capacity of a drummer. At first, everything went as though on oiled wheels, and our Frenchman entered Moscow with head erect. But on the return journey poor M—r. Lejeune, half frozen and without his drum, fell into the hands of the Smolénsk peasants. The Smolénsk peasants locked him up for the night in an empty fulling-mill, and on the following morning led him to a

hole in the ice, close to the dam, and began to entreat the drummer "de la grrrrande armée," to do them a favour, that is, to dive under the ice. M—r. Lejeune could not assent to their proposal, and, in return, he began to try to prevail upon the Smolénsk peasants, in the French dialect, to set him free to return to Orléans. "There, messieurs," said he, "dwells my mother, *une tendre mère.*" But the peasants, probably in consequence of their ignorance as to the geographical situation of Orléans, continued to propose to him a trip under the ice, with the downward current of the winding little river Gnilotyórka, and had already begun to encourage him with gentle thrusts in the vertebræ of his neck and back, when, all of a sudden, to the indescribable joy of Lejeune, the sound of a small bell rang out, and on to the dam drove a huge sledge with a gay-hued rug on the exaggeratedly elevated foot-board behind, and drawn by a team of three roan-horses. In the sledge sat a fat, red-faced landed proprietor in a wolf-skin coat.

"What are you doing there?"—he asked the peasants.

"Why, we 're drowning a Frenchman, dear little father."

"Ah!"—returned the squire, indifferently, and turned away.

"Monsieur! Monsieur!"—shrieked the poor man.

"Ah, ah!"—remarked the wolf-skin coat, reprovingly:—"he has come to Russia with the twelve nations,[1] has burned Moscow,—the accursed one!—has torn the cross from Iván Velíky,[2] and now 't is 'Musieu, Musieu!' and now he has tucked his tail between his legs! The thief ought to suffer torture. . . . . Drive on, Fílka!"

The horses started.

"Ah, stop, though!"—added the squire. . . . "hey, thou, Musieu, dost understand music?"

"*Sauvez-moi, sauvez-moi, mon bon monsieur!*"—repeated Lejeune.

"Did any one ever see such a race! and not one of them knows a single word of Russian! *Musique, musique, savez musique vous?*—on piano *jouez savez?*"

Lejeune understood, at last, what the landed proprietor was driving at, and nodded his head affirmatively.

"*Oui, monsieur, oui, oui, je suis musicien; je joue tous les instruments possibles! Oui, monsieur . . . . . Sauvez-moi, monsieur!*"

"Well, thou hast had a narrow escape,"—retorted the squire. . . "Release him, my lads: here 's a twenty-kopék piece for you, for liquor."

[1] In the grand Te Deum which is celebrated always on Christmas Day, in commemoration of the delivery of Russia, in 1812, the French and their allies are called "the Gauls and the Twelve Nations"—the word employed for nation being the one which is derived from the same root as the word heathen.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] The great belfry of the Kremlin.—TRANSLATOR.

" Thanks, dear little father, thanks. Please take him."

They seated Lejeune in the sledge. He was choking with joy, he wept, trembled, made obeisance, thanked the squire, the coachman, the peasants. He wore a green under-jacket with pink ribbons, and the weather was gloriously cold. The squire cast a silent glance at his blue and benumbed limbs, wrapped the unhappy man in his fur cloak, and carried him home. The servants flocked together. They hastily warmed, fed, and clothed the Frenchman. The squire conducted him to his daughters.

" Here, children,"—he said to them:—" I 've found a teacher for you. You have kept pestering me, ' Teach us music and the French dialect ': so here 's a Frenchman for you, and he plays on the piano too. . . . Come on, Musieu,"—he continued, pointing to the miserable little piano, which he had purchased five years previously from a Jew, who, however, peddled Cologne water:—" show us your skill: *jouez!* "

Lejeune, with sinking heart, seated himself on the stool: he had never laid finger on a piano since he was born.

" Come, *jouez, jouez!* "—repeated the squire.

In desperation, the poor fellow banged on the keys as though they had been a drum, and played at haphazard. . . . . " I really thought," he said, as he told the story afterward, " that my res-

cuer would seize me by the collar, and fling me out of the house." But, to the intense amazement of the involuntary improvisatore, the landed proprietor, after a while, slapped him approvingly on the shoulder. "Good, good,"—said he, "I see that thou knowest how; go now, and rest."

A couple of weeks later, Lejeune was transferred from this landed proprietor to another, a wealthy and cultivated man, became a favourite with him through his cheerful and gentle disposition, married his pupil, entered the government service, married his daughter to landed proprietor Lobysányeff of the Orel government, a retired dragoon and poet, and himself removed his residence to Orel.

And it was this same Lejeune, or, as he was now called, Franz Iványitch, who entered the room of Ovsyánikoff, with whom he was on friendly terms. . . . .

But, perhaps, the reader is already tired of sitting with me at Freeholder Ovsyánikoff's, and therefore I will preserve an eloquent silence.

VII

LGOFF [1]

"LET 's go to Lgoff,"—said Ermolái, who is already known to the reader, to me one day;—"we can shoot a lot of ducks there."

Although a wild duck offers nothing particularly attractive for a genuine sportsman, still, in the temporary absence of other game (it was the beginning of September; the woodcock had not yet arrived, and I had got tired of tramping over the fields after partridges), I gave heed to my huntsman, and set off for Lgoff.

Lgoff is a large village on the steppe, with an extremely ancient stone church of one cupola, and two mills, on the marshy little river Rosóta. Five versts from Lgoff this little stream becomes a broad pond, overgrown along the edges and here and there in the middle with dense reeds. On this pond, in the bays or stagnant spots amid the reeds, there bred and dwelt an innumerable mass of ducks of all possible varieties: widgeon, semi-widgeon, pintails, teals, mergansers, and so

[1] The soft sign between the *l* and the *g* renders the former soft: so that this is pronounced almost as though spelled L[i]goff.—TRANSLATOR.

forth. Small coveys were constantly flying to and fro, hovering over the water, and a shot started up such clouds of them, that the sportsman involuntarily clapped one hand to his cap and emitted a prolonged: "Phe-e-ew!"—Ermolái and I started to walk along the edge of the pond, but, in the first place, the duck, which is a wary bird, does not take up its stand on the shore itself; in the second place, even if any laggard and inexperienced teal had succumbed to our shots and lost its life, our dogs would not have been able to retrieve it in the dense reed-growth: in spite of the most noble self-sacrifice, they could neither have swum, nor walked on the bottom, and would have cut their precious noses against the sharp edges of the reeds all in vain.

"No,"—said Ermolái at last:—"this won't do: we must get a boat. . . . Let's return to Lgoff."

We set off. We had taken only a few steps when from behind a thick willow, a decidedly wretched setter ran forth to meet us, and in its wake a man made his appearance—a man of medium stature, in a blue, very threadbare coat, a yellowish waistcoat, trousers of the tint known as *gris-de-laine* or *bleu-d'amour,* hastily tucked into boots full of holes, with a red kerchief on his neck, and a single-barrelled gun on his shoulder. While our dogs, with the Chinese ceremonial habitual to their race, sniffed at the unfa-

miliar individual, who was evidently intimidated, tucked his tail between his legs, dropped his ears, and briskly wriggled all over without bending his knees and showing his teeth the while,—the stranger came up to us, and made a very polite obeisance. Judging by his appearance, he was about five and twenty years of age; his long, light chestnut hair, strongly impregnated with kvas, stuck out in motionless little pig-tails,—his small brown eyes blinked amiably,—his whole face, bound up with a black kerchief, as though he were suffering from the toothache, beamed voluptuously.

"Allow me to introduce myself,"—he began, in a soft, insinuating voice:—"I 'm the huntsman here, Vladímir. . . . . On hearing of your arrival, and learning that you had deigned to direct your steps to the shores of our pond, I have decided, if it will not be disagreeable to you, to offer you my services."

Huntsman Vladímir talked precisely like a young provincial actor who plays the parts of the leading lovers. I accepted his proposal, and before we reached Lgoff I had succeeded in learning his history. He was a house-serf who had been set at liberty; in his tender youth, he had studied music, then had served as valet, knew how to read and write, had read a few little books, so far as I could make out, and while now existing, as many do exist in Russia, without a far-

thing in cash, without any fixed occupation, subsisted on something pretty near akin to heavenly manna. He expressed himself with remarkable elegance and obviously took a foppish pride in his manners; he must have been a frightful dangler after the women, too, and, in all probability, enjoyed successes in that line: Russian maidens love eloquence. Among other things, he directed my attention to the fact, that he sometimes called on the neighbouring landed proprietors, and went to town to visit, and played preference, and was acquainted with people in the county capital. He smiled in a masterly manner, and with extreme diversity; the modest, reserved smile which played over his lips when he was listening to the remarks of other people, was particularly becoming to him. He would listen to you, and agree with you perfectly, but nevertheless he did not lose the sense of his own dignity, and seemed to be desirous of giving you to understand that, on occasion, he might put forth an opinion of his own. Ermolái, being a man of not too much education, and not in the least "subtle," undertook to address him as "thou." You ought to have seen the grin with which Vladímir addressed him as "you-sir." . . . .

"Why are you wearing that kerchief-bandage?"—I asked him.—"Have you the toothache?"

"No, sir,"—he replied:—"it is, rather, the

noxious result of imprudence. I had a friend, a fine man, sir, not a huntsman at all, as that sometimes happens, sir. Well, sir, one day he says to me: 'My dear friend, take me a-hunting: I feel curious to know what diversion there is in that.' Naturally, I did not wish to refuse my comrade; I furnished him with a gun, sir, for my part, and took him a-hunting, sir. Well, sir, we hunted our fill, as was proper; and, at last, we took it into our heads to rest, sir. I sat down under a tree; but he, on his side, on the contrary, began to play pranks with his gun, sir, and took aim at me. I requested him to stop it, but, in his inexperience, he did not heed me, sir. The gun went off, and I lost my chin and the forefinger of my right hand. . . . . ."

We reached Lgoff. But Vladímir and Ermoláí had decided that it was impossible to hunt without a boat.

"Sutchók has a barge-plank punt,"[1]—remarked Vladímir:—"but I don't know where he has hidden it. I must run to him."

"To whom?" I asked.

"Why, a man lives here whose nickname is Sutchók" (The Twig).

Vladímir, with Ermoláí, set off in quest of The Twig. I told them that I would wait for them at the church. As I inspected the tombstones in the churchyard, I hit upon a blackened, quadrangular urn, with the following inscrip-

[1] A flat boat knocked together from old barge planks.

tions: on one side, in French characters: " Ci-gît Théophile-Henri, Vicomte de Blangy; " on another: " Beneath this stone is interred the body of Count Blangy, French subject; born 1737, died 1799, at the age of 62; " on the third side: " Peace to his ashes; " on the fourth side:

Beneath this stone lies a French emigrant:
He had birth distinguished and talent.
By the massacre of wife and family distressed,
He abandoned his fatherland by the tyrant oppressed;
The shores of the Russian land having attained,
In his old age a hospitable roof-tree he gained;
The children he taught, the parents consoled. . . . .
Here the Almighty Judge has given rest to his soul.

The arrival of Ermoláï, Vladímir, and the man with the strange nickname, The Twig, interrupted my meditations.

Barefooted, tattered, and dishevelled, The Twig seemed, from his appearance, to be a retired house-serf, about sixty years of age.

" Hast thou a boat? "—I asked.

" I have,"—he replied, in a dull and cracked voice:—" but it 's very bad."

" How so? "

" It 's coming apart; and the plugs have fallen out of the holes." [1]

" A great misfortune that," put in Ermoláï: " but we can stuff in tow."

[1] See note on page 21.—Translator.

"Of course, that is possible,"—assented The Twig.

"But who art thou?"

"The squire's fisherman."

"How canst thou be a fisherman, and have thy boat in such disrepair?"

"Why, there are no fish in our river."

"Fish don't like rusty swamp-water,"—remarked my huntsman, pompously.

"Well,"—I said to Ermolái:—"go, get some tow, and repair the boat for us, and be quick about it."

Ermolái departed.

"Well, I suppose we shall go to the bottom, anyway?"—I said to Vladímir.

"God is merciful,"—he replied. "In any case, we are bound to suppose that the pond is not deep."

"No, it is n't deep,"—remarked The Twig, who talked in a curious manner, as though half asleep:—"and there is slime and grass on the bottom, and it 's all overgrown with grass. However, there are pit-holes too."

"But if the grass is so strong,"—remarked Vladímir:—"it will be impossible to row."

"Why, but who does row a punt? It must be shoved with a pole; I have a pole yonder,—or a shovel will do."

"A shovel is clumsy, I don't suppose one could touch bottom with it in some places,"—said Vladímir.

"That 's true, it is awkward."

I sat down on a grave to wait for Ermolái. Vladímir went off a little way, from a sense of propriety, and sat down also. The Twig continued to stand in the same spot, with drooping head, and hands folded behind his back, out of old habit.

"Tell me, please,"—I began:—"hast thou been a fisherman here long?"

"This is the seventh year,"—he replied, with a start.

"And what was thy previous occupation?"

"Formerly I was a coachman."

"Who discharged thee from the post of coachman?"

"Why, the new mistress."

"What mistress?"

"Why, the one who has bought us. You don't know her: Alyóna [Eléna] Timofyéevna, such a fat woman . . . . and not young."

"What made her take it into her head to promote thee to be the fisherman?"

"God knows. . She came to us from her estate, from Tambóff, ordered all the house-serfs to assemble, and came out to us. First of all, we went and kissed her hand, and she made no objection: she was not angry. . . And then she began to question us, one after the other: what did each do, what duties did he perform? My turn came; so she asks: 'What hast thou been?' I say: 'A coachman!'—'A coachman? Well, a

pretty sort of coachman thou art; just look a
thyself: a coachman, forsooth! 'T is not fit tha
thou shouldst be a coachman: thou shalt be m
fisherman, and thou must shave off thy beard
When I come hither, thou art to supply fish fo
my table, dost hear?' . . . So from that tim
forth, I have been reckoned a fisherman. An
it is my business, you see, to keep the pond i
order. . . . . But how is it to be kept in order?

"To whom did you formerly belong?"

"Why, to Sergyéi Sergyéitch Pékhterof
We came to him through inheritance. But h
did not own us long,—six years in all. And
served as coachman to him . . . but not in tow
—there he had others, but in the country."

"And wert thou always a coachman, from th
youth up?"

"A coachman, indeed! I became a coachma
under Sergyéi Sergyéitch, but before that I wa
the cook,—but not in town, but thus, in the coun
try."

"And whose cook wert thou?"

"Why, my former master's, Afanásy Nefyó
ditch, uncle to Sergyéi Sergyéitch. He bough
Lgoff, Afanásy Nefyóditch bought it, and Ser
gyéi Sergyéitch inherited the estate."

"From whom did he buy it?"

"Why, from Tatyána Vasílievna!"

"From what Tatyána Vasílievna?"

"Why, the one yonder, who died year before

last, near Bolkhóff . . . . I mean to say, near Karátchevo,—a spinster. . . . . And she was never married. Don't you know her? We came to her from her father, from Vasíly Semyónitch. She owned us a pretty long time . . . . about twenty years."

"Well, and so thou wert her cook?"

"At first, in fact, I was a cook, and then I became kofischenk."

"What?"

"Kofischenk."

"What sort of an employment is that?"

"Why, I don't know, dear little father. I was attached to the butler's pantry, and my name was Antón, and not Kuzmá. Those were the mistress's orders."

"Is thy real name Kuzmá?"

"Yes."

"And wert thou kofischenk all the time?"

"No, not all the time: I was also an actor."

"Is it possible?"

"Of course I was. . . . I played in the keatre. Our mistress set up a keatre in her house."

"What parts didst thou play?"

"What were you pleased to ask, sir?"

"What didst thou do in the theatre?"

"Why, don't you know? Well, they would take and dress me up; and I would walk about decked out, or stand, or sit, as the case might be.

They would tell me: 'This is what thou must say'—and I would say it. Once I represented a blind man. . . They put a pea under each of my eyelids. . . So they did!"

"And after that, what wert thou?"

"After that, I became a cook again."

"Why did they degrade thee to the position of cook?"

"Why, my brother ran away."

"Well, and what wert thou with the father of thy first mistress?"

"Why, I discharged various duties: first I was a page, a falet, a shoemaker, and also a whipper-in."

"A whipper-in? . . . . And didst thou ride to hounds?"

"I did, and injured myself: I fell from my horse, and hurt the horse. Our old master was very severe; he ordered me to be flogged, and to be apprenticed to a shoemaker in Moscow."

"What dost thou mean by apprenticeship? I don't suppose thou wert a whipper-in while thou wert a child?"

"I was over twenty."

"And what sort of instruction could there be at twenty?"

"Of course, if the master ordered, there was no help. But, luckily, he died soon after,—and they brought me back to the village."

"But when didst thou learn the art of cookery?"

The Twig raised his thin, sallow face a little, and laughed aloud.

"Why, does one learn that?—But even the peasant women can cook!"

"Well," said I:—"thou hast seen sights in thy day, Kuzmá! And what dost thou do now, as fisherman, if there are no fish on thy mistress's estate?"

"Why, dear little father, I have nothing to complain of. And thank God that I was made the fisherman. For the mistress ordered just such another old fellow as me—Andréi Pupýr—to the paper-mill as water-carrier. 'T is sinful,' says she, 'to eat the bread of idleness.' . . . . And Pupýr was counting on favour: his first cousin's son is clerk in the mistress's office, and he had promised to report about him to the mistress, to remind her of him. Much he reminded her! . . . And Pupýr, before my very eyes, bowed down to his cousin-nephew's feet."

"Hast thou any family? Hast thou been married?"

"No, dear little father. The late Tatyána Vasílievna—the kingdom of heaven be hers!—permitted no one to marry. God forbid! She used to say: 'I live unwedded, as you see. What self-indulgence! who needs it?'"

"On what dost thou live now? Dost thou receive wages?"

"Wages, indeed, dear little father! . . . They give me my victuals—and thanks to Thee, O Lord, for that same! I 'm well satisfied. May God prolong our mistress's life!"

Ermoláï returned.

"The boat is repaired,"—he said surlily.—"Go fetch thy pole—thou!" The Twig ran for his pole. During the whole time of my conversation with the poor old man, Vladímir the huntsman had stared at him with a scornful smile.

"A stupid man, sir,"—he said, when the latter went away:—"an entirely uneducated man, a peasant, sir, nothing more, sir. He cannot be called a house-serf, sir . . . he was just bragging all the time, sir. . . . Just judge for yourself, sir, how could he be an actor, sir? You have deigned to bother yourself unnecessarily, you have condescended to chat with him, sir!"

A quarter of an hour later, we were seated in the punt. (We had left the dog in the cottage, under the oversight of the coachman Iegudiíl.) We were not very comfortable, but hunters are not extremely fastidious folks. The Twig stood at the blunt-pointed stern, and "shoved." Vladímir and I sat on the cross-seats of the boat. Ermoláï placed himself in front, at the very bow. In spite of the tow, water speedily made its appearance under our feet. Fortunately, the

weather was calm, and the pond was as quiet as though asleep.

We floated on rather slowly. The old man with difficulty pulled his long pole out of the ooze, all wound about with the green threads of the submarine sedges; the thick, circular pads of the marsh lilies also impeded the progress of our boat. At last we reached the reeds, and the fun began. The ducks rose noisily, " tore themselves " from the pond, frightened by our unexpected appearance in their domain, shots followed them thick and fast, and it was diverting to see those bob-tailed birds turn somersaults in the air and flop down heavily on the water. As a matter of course, we did not retrieve all the ducks we shot: the slightly wounded dived; some, killed outright, fell into such dense clumps of reeds that even Ermolái's carroty-hued little eyes could not detect them; but, nevertheless, by dinner-time our boat was filled to overflowing with game.

Vladímir, to the great amazement of Ermolái, proved to be very far from a good shot, and after each unsuccessful discharge felt surprised, inspected and blew into his gun, was puzzled, and, at last, explained to us the reason why he had missed his aim. Ermolái shot, as usual, with triumphant success; I, quite badly, according to my wont. The Twig gazed at us with the eyes of a man who has been in the service of the gen-

try from his youth up, shouted now and then, "Yonder, yonder is another duck!"—and kept incessantly scratching his back—not with his hands, but with his shoulders, which he set in motion. The weather was magnificent: round, white clouds floated high and softly over our heads, and were clearly reflected in the water; the reeds whispered around us; the pond, in spots, glittered like steel in the sunlight. We were preparing to return to the village, when, all of a sudden, a decidedly unpleasant accident happened to us.

We had long since noticed that the water had been gradually but constantly gathering in our punt. Vladímir was commissioned to bail it out, by means of a dipper, which my provident huntsman had abstracted, in case of need, from a peasant woman who was not watching. Things went on as they should, until Vladímir forgot his duty. But toward the end of the hunt, as though by way of farewell, the ducks began to rise in such flocks, that we hardly had time to load our guns. In the smoke of the firing, we paid no attention to the condition of our punt,—and suddenly, at a violent motion on the part of Ermolái (he was trying to secure a duck which had been killed, and was bearing his full weight against the gunwale), our decrepit vessel careened, filled with water, and triumphantly went to the bottom,—fortunately, at a spot where the water was not

deep. We cried out, but it was already too late: a moment later, we were standing up to our necks in the water, surrounded by the floating carcasses of the dead ducks. I cannot now recall without laughter the frightened, pallid countenances of my companions (probably, my own face was not distinguished by its high colour at the time, either); but at that moment, I must confess, it never entered my head to laugh. Each of us held his gun over his head, and The Twig, probably owing to his habit of imitating his superiors, elevated his pole on high also. Ermolái was the first to break the silence.

"Whew, damn it!"—he muttered, spitting into the water: "here 's a pretty mess! And it 's all thy fault, thou old devil!"—he added angrily, turning to The Twig:—"what sort of a boat dost thou call that?"

"Forgive me!"—faltered the old man.

"Yes, and thou art a nice one too,"—went on my huntsman, turning his head in the direction of Vladímir:—"why wert not thou on the look-out? why didst thou not bail? thou, thou, thou . . . ."

But Vladímir was already past retorting; he was trembling like a leaf, his teeth were chattering, and he was smiling in a wholly senseless way. What had become of his fine language, his sense of delicate propriety, and his own dignity!

The accursed punt rocked weakly under our feet. . . . At the moment of our ship-wreck, the water had seemed to us extremely cold, but we soon got used to it. When the first alarm subsided, I glanced about me: all around, at a distance of ten paces from us, grew reeds; far away, over their tops, the shore was visible. "We 're in a bad plight!" I thought.

"What are we to do?"—I asked Ermolái.

"Why, here now, let 's see; we can't spend the night here,"—he replied.—"Here now, hold my gun,"—he said to Vladímir.

Vladímir submissively obeyed.

"I 'll go and search out a ford,"—went on Ermolái, with confidence, as though in every pond there must, infallibly, exist a ford,—took the pole from The Twig, and set off in the direction of the shore, cautiously probing the bottom.

"But canst thou swim?"—I asked him.

"No, I can't,"—rang out his voice, from behind the reeds.

"Well, then he 'll drown,"—indifferently remarked The Twig, who had at first been frightened, not at the danger, but at our wrath, and now, with perfect composure, merely drew a long breath from time to time, and, apparently, felt no imperative necessity to alter his situation.

"And he 'll perish quite uselessly, sir,"—added Vladímir, plaintively.

Ermolái did not return for more than an hour.

That hour seemed an eternity to us. At first we exchanged shouts with him very assiduously; then he began to answer our calls more infrequently, and at last he fell silent altogether. In the village the bells began to ring for vespers. We did not talk with each other, we even tried not to look at each other. The ducks hovered over our heads; some prepared to alight beside us, but suddenly soared aloft, "like a shot," as the saying is, and flew quacking away. We began to grow numb. The Twig blinked his eyes, as though he were inclined to be sleepy.

At last, to our indescribable joy, Ermolái returned.

"Well, what now?"

"I have been to the shore; I have found a ford."

"Let us go."

We wanted to set off on the instant; but first he drew a rope from his pocket under water, tied the dead ducks by their legs, took both ends in his teeth, and strode on in front; Vladímir followed him, I followed Vladímir, and The Twig closed the procession. It was about two hundred paces to the shore. Ermolái walked onward boldly, and without a halt (so well had he taken note of the road), only calling out, from time to time: "More to the left,—there 's a sink-hole on the right!" or: "To the right,—there on the left you 'll stick fast." . . . . At

times the water reached our throats, and twice the poor Twig, being lower of stature than the rest of us, choked and emitted bubbles.—" Come, come, come! "—shouted Ermolái menacingly at him,—and The Twig scrambled, floundered about with his feet, hopped, and, somehow or other, reached a shallower spot; but, even in extremity, he could not bring himself to clutch the tail of my coat. Worn out, dirty, soaked, we reached the shore at last.

Two hours later, we were all sitting, dried so far as that was possible, in a large hay-shed, and preparing to sup. Iegudiíl, extremely slow to start, disinclined to move, sagacious and sleepy, stood at the gate, and assiduously regaled The Twig with snuff. (I have noticed that coachmen in Russia speedily strike up friendship.) The Twig snuffed it up furiously to the point of nausea: spat, coughed, and, to all appearances, experienced great satisfaction. Vladímir assumed a languid air, lolled his head on one side, and said little. The dogs wagged their tails with exaggerated briskness, in anticipation of oatmeal porridge; the horses were stamping and neighing under the shed. . . . . The sun had set; its last rays dispersed in crimson streaks; little golden clouds spread over the sky, growing ever thinner and thinner, like a fleece washed and combed. . . . . Songs resounded in the village.

VIII

BYÉZHIN MEADOW

It was a magnificent July day, one of those days which come only when the weather has been fair for a long time. From the very earliest dawn the sky is clear; the morning glow does not flame like a conflagration: it pours itself forth in a gentle flush. The sun, not fiery, not red-hot, as in the season of sultry drought, not of a dull crimson, as before a tempest, but bright, and agreeably radiant, glides up peacefully under a long, narrow cloudlet, beams freshly, and plunges into its lilac mist. The thin upper edges of the outstretched cloudlet begin to flash like darting serpents; their gleam resembles the gleam of hammered silver. . . . But now the sportive rays have burst forth once more,—and the mighty luminary rises merrily and majestically, as though flying. In the neighbourhood of midday, a multitude of round, high-hanging clouds make their appearance, of a golden-grey hue, with tender white rims. Like islands, scattered upon a river which has overflowed to an endless extent, and streams around them in profoundly-transparent branches of level azure, they

hardly stir from their places. Further away, toward the horizon, they move to meet each other, press close upon one another, and there is no azure to be seen between them, but they themselves are as blue as the sky: they are all permeated, through and through, with light and warmth. The colour of the horizon, a light, pale lilac, does not undergo any change all day long, and is the same all the way round; nowhere does it grow darker, nowhere is a thunder-storm brewing; here and there, perhaps, bluish streaks run downward from above, or a barely perceptible shower sprinkles down. Toward evening, these clouds vanish; the last of them, blackish and undefined in form, like smoke, lie in rosy, curling wreaths over against the setting sun; at the place where it has gone down as tranquilly as it rose in the sky, a scarlet aureole stands, for a little while, above the darkening earth, and, flickering softly, like a carefully carried taper, the evening star kindles in it. On such days, the colours are all softened, bright but not gaudy; over everything rests the imprint of a certain touching gentleness. On such days the heat is sometimes very great; sometimes, even, it is "stewing hot" on the slopes of the fields; but the breeze chases away, disperses the accumulated sultriness, circling wind-gusts—an unfailing sign of settled weather—wander in tall white columns of dust along the roads across the tilled land. The dry,

pure air is redolent of wormwood, crushed rye, buckwheat; even an hour before nightfall, you will feel no dampness. This is the sort of weather which the farmer craves for harvesting his grain.

On precisely such a day, I was once hunting partridges in the Tchyórnoye district of the Túla government. I had found and shot quite a lot of game; my well-filled game-bag was cutting pitilessly into my shoulder; but the evening glow had already died out, and in the air, which was still light, although no longer illuminated by the rays of the setting sun, the chilly shadows were beginning to thicken and spread abroad when, at last, I decided to return home. With swift strides I traversed a long "square" of second-growth bushes, climbed a hill, and, instead of the familiar level stretch with its oak copse, which I had expected to see on my right, and the low-browed white church in the distance, I beheld an entirely different set of places, with which I was not acquainted. At my feet stretched a narrow vale; directly opposite, a dense grove of aspen trees rose in a steep wall. I halted in bewilderment, and glanced about me. . . . . "Oho!" I thought: "why, I have lost my way completely: I have kept too much to the right," and, amazed at my mistake, I briskly descended the hill. I was immediately beset by a disagreeable, motionless dampness, as though I had entered a cellar:

the thick, tall grass on the floor of the vale, all wet through, gleamed like a smooth, white table-cloth; somehow, one felt uneasy about stepping on it. I scrambled up the opposite slope as alertly as possible, keeping to the left, along the aspen grove. Bats were already flitting above its slumbering crests, mysteriously circling and quivering against the confusedly-clear sky; a belated hawk flew past smartly and directly upward, hurrying to its nest. "Now, as soon as I turn yonder corner," I thought to myself, "I shall immediately strike the road;—but I have made a loop of a verst!"

At last, I reached the corner of the forest, but there was no road: some low-growing, unfelled bushes spread out broadly in front of me, and beyond them, far, far away, a stretch of waste land was visible. Again I came to a standstill. "What 's the meaning of this? . . . Why, where am I?"—I began to recall how and where I had roamed during the course of the day. . . "Eh! why, these are the Parákhinsko bushes!" I exclaimed at last: "that 's it exactly! that must be the Sindyéevo copse yonder. . . But how in the world did I get here? So far? . . . . 'T is strange! Now I must keep to the right again."

I went to the right, through the bushes. In the meantime night was drawing on, and growing like a thunder-cloud; it seemed as though, along with the nocturnal exhalations, the darkness rose

from all directions, and even streamed down from on high. I hit upon an unbeaten, overgrown path; I advanced along it, attentively gazing ahead. Everything around was swiftly growing black and silent,—only the quails uttered a call from time to time. A small night bird, darting inaudibly and low on its soft wings, almost came into collision with me, and dived aside in affright. I emerged upon the edge of the bush-growth, and wended my way along the boundary strip of sward between two fields. Already I could make out distant objects only with difficulty: the field gleamed dimly white around me; beyond it, moving nearer with every passing moment in huge masses, surged up the grim gloom. My footsteps resounded dully in the chilly air. The sky, which had paled, began to turn blue again,—but it was the nocturnal blue now. Tiny stars began to twinkle, to stir in it.

That which I had been on the point of taking for a grove, turned out to be a dark, round hillock. "But where am I, then?" I repeated, once more, aloud, halted for the third time, and stared inquiringly at my English, yellow-spotted hound, Dianka, positively the cleverest of all four-footed creatures. But the cleverest of quadrupeds only wagged her tail, blinked her weary eyes dolefully, and gave me no practical advice. I felt ashamed in her presence, and rushed desperately onward, as though I had sud-

denly divined whither I ought to go, skirted the hillock, and found myself in a shallow depression, tilled all around. A strange feeling immediately took possession of me. This hollow had almost the form of a regular kettle, with sloping sides; on its bottom several large, white boulders reared themselves on end,—they seemed to have crawled down there to hold a secret conference, and the place was so deaf and dumb, the sky hung over it so flatly, so dejectedly, that my heart contracted within me. Some sort of a small, wild animal was whining weakly and pitifully among the boulders. I made haste to retreat behind the hillock. Up to this moment, I had not yet lost hope of finding my way home; but now I became definitively convinced that I was completely lost, and without making the slightest further effort to recognise my surroundings, which were almost entirely drowned in the mist, I walked straight ahead, guided by the stars, at random. . . . I continued to walk thus for about half an hour, with difficulty putting one foot before the other. It seemed to me that, never since I was born, had I been in such desert places: not a single light twinkled anywhere, not a sound was audible. One sloping hill succeeded another, fields stretched out after fields in endless succession, bushes seemed fairly to spring out of the earth in front of my very nose. I kept walking on and on, and was already

making ready to lie down somewhere until the morning, when, suddenly, I found myself on the brink of a frightful abyss.

I hastily drew back my foot, which was thrust forward, and athwart the barely penetrable gloom of night I descried, far down beneath me, a vast ravine. A broad river swept around it in a semicircle which swerved away from me; steely gleams of water, flashing forth rarely and dimly, designated its course. The hill on which I found myself descended in an almost perpendicular precipice; its huge outlines stood out, darkling, against the bluish aërial waste, and directly beneath me, in the angle formed by the precipice and the level plain, beside the river, which, at that point, stood like a dark, motionless mirror, beneath the very steep face of the hill, burned and smoked, side by side, two fires. Around them people were swarming, shadows were flickering, the front half of a small, curly head was at times brilliantly illuminated. . .

I recognised, at last, whither I had come. This meadow is renowned in our vicinity under the name of the Byézhin Meadow. . . . . But there was no possibility of getting home, especially by night; my legs were giving way beneath me with weariness. I made up my mind to approach the fires, and, in the company of the people, whom I took for drovers, to await the dawn. I made a successful descent, but before I

could release from my hand the last bough I had clutched, two large, white, shaggy dogs flew at me, barking viciously. Ringing childish voices resounded around the fires; two or three little boys rose hastily from the ground. They ran toward me, called off the dogs, who had been particularly surprised by the appearance of my Dianka, and I approached them.

I had made a mistake in taking the persons who were sitting round those fires for drovers. They were simply peasant children from the neighbouring village, who were herding the horses. In our parts, during the hot summer weather, the horses are driven out to graze in the fields at night: by day, the flies and gadflies would give them no peace. It is a great treat for the peasant lads to drive the herd out at eventide and drive them home at dawn. Seated, capless, and in old half-coats, on the most restive nags, they dash on with merry whoops and shouts, with dangling arms and legs, bouncing high aloft, with ringing laughter. The light dust rises in a column and blows along the road; far away, the vigorous trampling of hoofs is borne on the air, the horses race onward, pricking up their ears; in front of all, flirting its tail, and incessantly changing foot, gallops a shaggy reddish-yellow beast, with burdock burs in its tangled mane.

I told the little lads that I had lost my way, and sat down with them. They asked me

whence I had come, fell silent, drew aside. We chatted a little. I lay down under a gnawed bush, and began to look about me. It was a wonderful picture; around the fires quivered, and, as it were, flickered, resting against the darkness, a round, reddish reflection; the flame, flashing up now and then, cast swift gleams beyond the limit of that circle; a thin tongue of light would lick the bare boughs of the scrub-willows and instantly vanish;—long, sharp-pointed shadows, breaking forth, for a moment, in their turn, rushed up to the very fires: the gloom wrestled with the light. Sometimes, when the flame burned more feebly, and the circle of light contracted, a horse's head would suddenly thrust itself forward out of the invading gloom,—a brown horse, with a sinuous white mark on the forehead, or all white,—and gaze attentively and dully at us, briskly chewing a long tuft of grass the while, and, lowering again, immediately disappear. All that was audible was, that it continued to chew and snort. From the illuminated place, it was difficult to discern what was going on in the darkness, and, consequently, everything near at hand seemed enveloped in an almost black curtain; but further away, toward the horizon, hills and forests could be dimly descried, in long splashes. The dark, pure sky stood solemnly and boundlessly high above us, with all its mysterious majesty. The breast felt sweet oppression as it

inhaled that peculiar, fresh and enervating fragrance—the fragrance of a Russian summer night. Hardly a sound was audible round about. . . . Only now and then, in the near-by river, a large fish would splash with sudden sonorousness, and the reeds upon the banks would rustle faintly, barely rocked by a truant wave. . . . The fires alone crackled softly.

The little boys sat around them; there, also, sat the two dogs, who would have liked to devour me. For a long time, they could not reconcile themselves to my presence, and, sleepily screwing up their eyes, and casting sidelong glances at the fire, they growled, now and then, with the consciousness of their own dignity; first they growled, and then whined faintly, as though they regretted the impossibility of fulfilling their desire. There were five lads in all: Fédya, Pavlúsha, Iliúsha, Kóstya, and Ványa. (I learned their names from their conversation, and intend to introduce them at once to the reader.)

You would have said that the first, the oldest of them all, Fédya, was fourteen. He was a graceful lad, with handsome, delicate, and rather small features, curly fair hair, light eyes, and a constant, half-merry, half-abstracted smile. He belonged, by all the tokens, to a rich family, and went out thus into the fields, not through necessity, but because he wished it, for amusement. He wore a gay print shirt with a yellow border;

a small, new peasant's long-coat, hanging from his shoulders, the sleeves unused, hardly held in place on his narrow shoulders; from his sky-blue girdle hung a small comb. His boots, with narrow leg-pieces, were really his boots—not his father's. The second lad, Pavlúsha, had tangled, black hair, grey eyes, broad cheek-bones, a pale, pockmarked face, a large, but regular mouth; his whole head was huge as a beer-kettle, as the expression is, his body stubby, uncouth. He was a homely little fellow,—there 's no denying that! —but, nevertheless, he pleased me: his gaze was very sensible and direct, and power resounded in his voice. His garments were nothing to boast of: they consisted of a plain hemp-cloth shirt and patched trousers. The face of the third, Iliúsha, was rather insignificant; hook-nosed, long, mole-eyed, it expressed a sort of stupid, sickly anxiety; his tightly compressed lips did not move, his knitted brows did not unbend,—he seemed to be always screening his eyes from the fire. His yellow, almost white hair stuck out in pointed tufts from beneath a low-crowned, felt cap, which he was incessantly pulling down over his ears with both hands. He wore new linden-bark slippers and leg-cloths; a thick cord, wound thrice around his body, carefully confined his neat, black coat. He and Pavlúsha were, apparently, not over twelve years of age. The fourth, Kóstya, a little lad of ten, excited my curiosity

by his thoughtful and melancholy gaze. His whole face was small, thin, freckled, pointed below, like that of a squirrel; his lips were hardly discernible; but his large, black eyes, shining with a liquid gleam, produced a strange impression: they seemed to want to express something for which the tongue—his tongue, at all events—had no words. He was short of stature, of fragile build, and dressed quite poorly. At first, I came near not noticing the last one, Ványa: he was lying on the ground, peaceably curled up under an angular rug, and only now and then did he thrust out from beneath it his curly chestnut head. This boy was, at most, seven years of age.

So I lay there under a bush, apart, and surveyed the little lads. A small kettle hung over one of the fires: in it they were boiling "'taties." Pavlúsha was watching it, and, kneeling, thrust a chip into the frothing water. Fédya was lying propped on his elbow, with the tails of his coat spread apart. Iliúsha was sitting beside Kóstya, and also screwing up his eyes intently. Kóstya had dropped his head a little, and was gazing off somewhere into the distance. Ványa did not stir under his rug. I pretended to be asleep. Gradually, the boys began to talk again.

At first they prattled about one thing and another, about the toils of the morrow, about the horses; but, all of a sudden, Fédya turned to

Iliúsha and, as though renewing an interrupted conversation, asked him:

"Well, and what wert thou saying—hast thou seen the domovóy?"[1]

"No, I have not seen him, and it is n't possible to see him,"—replied Iliúsha, in a hoarse, weak voice, whose sound precisely matched the expression of his face. "I heard him. . . . . And I was n't the only one."

"And whereabouts on your premises does he haunt?"—inquired Pavlúsha.

"In the old stuff-chest room."[2]

"But do you go to the mill?"

"Of course we do. My brother Avdiúshka and I are plater-boys."

"See there, now—you are mill-hands!" . . . .

"Well, and how didst thou come to hear him?"—asked Fédya.

"Why, this way. It happened that brother Avdiúshka and I, along with Feódor Mikhyéevsky and the squint-eyed Iváshka, and another Iváshka, who is from the Red Hills, and still another Iváshka Sukhorúkoff, and other boys also; there were ten of us lads in all,—the whole gang, that is to say; well, and it happened that we had to pass the night in the stuff-chest room,—that is to say, it did n't happen so, but Nazároff, the

[1] House-sprite, like the banshee.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] The building, in paper-mills, where the paper is bailed out of the stuff-chests. It is close to the dam, under the wheel.

overseer, forbade us to go home: says he: 'What 's the good,' says he, 'of you boys trudging home; there 's a lot of work for to-morrow, so don't you go home, my lads.' And so we stayed, and all lay down together, and Avdiúshka says, 'Well, boys, and what if the domovóy should come?' . . . . And before he, Avdyéi that is, had finished speaking, some one suddenly walked across over our heads; but we were lying down-stairs, and he was walking up-stairs, by the wheel. We hear him walking, and the boards fairly bend under him, and crack; now he has passed over our heads; the water suddenly begins to roar and roar against the wheel; the wheel begins to bang and bang, and to turn; but the sluice-gate is shut. We wonder:—who can have raised it, so that the water comes through? But the wheel went on turning and turning, and then stopped. Then that person went to the door up-stairs again, and began to descend the stairs, and came down as though he were in no hurry; the steps fairly groaned beneath him. . . . . Well, the person came to our door, waited, waited,—and suddenly the door flew wide open. We started up in terror, we looked—nothing! . . . . All of a sudden, behold, the mould at one of the stuff-chests began to move, rose up, tipped, and floated, floated like that, through the air, as though some one were rinsing with it, and then went back to its place. Then, at another chest,

the hook was taken from the nail, and put back on the nail again; then some one seemed to go to the door, and suddenly began to cough and hawk, like some sort of sheep, and so noisily. . . . . We all tumbled together in a heap, and crawled under one another. . . . . How scared we were that time!"

"You don't say so!"—remarked Pável.—"What made him cough?"

"I don't know; the dampness, perhaps."

All relapsed into silence.

"Well,"—inquired Fédya:—"are the 'taties done?"

Pavlúsha felt of them.

"No, they 're still raw. . . . . Whew, what a splash,"—he added, turning his face in the direction of the river:—"it must be a pike . . . . and yonder is a shooting star."

"See here, fellows, I 'll tell you something,"—began Kóstya, in a thin little voice:—"Listen to what daddy told me the other day."

"Come on, we 're listening,"—said Fédya, with a patronising mien.

"Of course, you know Gavrílo, the village carpenter?"

"Well, yes; we do."

"But do you know why he is always such a melancholy man: always silent, you know? This is why he is so melancholy: Once on a time, fellows, says my daddy, he went to the forest for

nuts. So he went to the forest for nuts, and got lost; God knows where he came out. So he walked and walked, fellows,—but no! he could n't find the road! and night was already at hand. So he sat down under a tree; 'I 'll just wait until morning,' says he to himself,—so he sat down, and fell into a doze. And while he was sleeping, he suddenly heard some one calling him. He looks—no one. Again he fell asleep, —again came the call. Again he looks and looks around: and in front of him, on a bough, sits a water-nymph; she rocks to and fro, and calls him to her, while she herself is dying with laughter. And she laughs so! . . . .And the moon was shining strongly,—so strongly, clearly is the moon shining, that everything is visible, my boys. So she calls him, and sits there on the bough, all brilliant, and white, just like a roach or a gudgeon,—or a carp, also, is whitish and silvery like that. . . . . Gavrílo the carpenter fairly fell back in a swoon, fellows; but she, you know, shrieked with laughter, and kept beckoning him to her with her hand, like this. Gavrílo tried to rise, tried to obey the water-nymph, fellows, but, you see, the Lord suggested something to him: he just made the sign of the cross over himself. . . . And how hard he found it to make that sign of the cross, fellows! He says: 'My hand was simply like stone, it would n't move. . . . Akh, thou wicked nymph, ah!'—So, fellows, when he

made the sign of the cross, that water-sprite ceased to laugh, and suddenly began to weep, as it were. . . . She weeps, fellows, and wipes her eyes with her hair, and her hair is as green as thy hemp. So Gavrílo stared and stared at her, and began to question her: 'Why weepest thou, thou imp of the forest?' But the water-sprite says to him: 'Thou shouldst not have crossed thyself, O man,' says she; 'thou mightest have lived with me to the end of thy days; and I am weeping, I am pining away, because thou hast crossed thyself; and 't is not I alone, who shall pine: pine thou, also, until the end of thy days.' Then she vanished, fellows, and Gavrílo immediately understood how he was to get out of the forest. . . . Only, from that time forth, he goes about always in that melancholy way."

"Ekha!"—remarked Fédya, after a brief silence:—"but how can such a wicked forest demon spoil a Christian soul,—he ought n't to have listened to her!"

"Oh, go along with you!"—said Kóstya.—"And Gavrílo said she had such a thin, wailing voice, like a toad's."

"Did thy dad narrate that himself?"—went on Fédya.

"Yes, he did. I was lying on the platform over the oven, and heard everything."

"A wonderful affair! Why should he be melancholy? . . . . Why, you know, if she

called him, 't was because ' she had taken a fancy to him.' "

" Yes, she had taken a fancy to him! "—put in Iliúsha.—" Of course, she wanted to tickle him, —that 's what she wanted. That 's what they do, those water-nymphs."

" Why, and there must be water-nymphs here, too,"—remarked Fédya.

" No,"—replied Kóstya:—" this is a clean place, a free place; for one thing, the river is hard by."

All fell silent. Suddenly, somewhere in the far distance, there rang out a long-drawn, sonorous, almost moaning sound, one of those incomprehensible nocturnal noises, which sometimes well up in the midst of profound stillness, rise aloft, hang suspended in the air, and slowly disperse, at last, as though they died away. You strain your ear,—and it seems as though there were nothing, yet it is tinkling. It seemed as though some one had shouted for a long, long time, at the very horizon, and some one else had answered his shout from the forest with a thin, shrill laugh, and a weak, hissing whistle flew with lightning speed along the river. The little lads exchanged glances, and shuddered.

" The power of the cross be with us! "—whispered Ilyá.

" Ekh, you simpletons! "—cried Pável: " what are you frightened at? Look here, the 'taties are

boiled soft." (They moved up round the little kettle, and began to eat the smoking-hot potatoes; Ványa alone did not stir.) "What 's the matter with thee?"—said Pável.

But he did not crawl forth from under his linden-bast rug. The little kettle was speedily emptied completely.

"But have you heard, my lads,"—began Iliúsha:—"what happened the other day at Varnávitzy?"

"On the dam, thou meanest?"—asked Fédya.

"Yes, yes, on the dam, the broken dam. 'T is an unhallowed place, you know, so unhallowed, and so God-forsaken. Everywhere around there are such ravines and precipices, and down the precipices snakes breed."

"Well, what happened? Go ahead and tell us."

"Why, this is what happened. Perhaps thou dost not know it, Fédya, but we have a drowned man buried there, and he was drowned long, long ago, when the pond was still deep; only his grave is still visible, and even that is barely visible: 't is just a tiny mound. . . . . Well, the other day, the manager calls up Ermíl the dog-keeper; says he: 'Go to the post-office, Ermíl.' Ermíl always does ride to the post-office: he has starved off all his dogs: that 's why they don't live with him, and they never did live with him, anyway, but he 's a fine whipper-in, he has all the gifts. So Ermíl rode off for the mail, and he lagged in the town,

and he was drunk when he started to ride back. And the night was a bright night: the moon was shining. . . . So Ermíl is riding across the dam: his road lay that way. And as he is riding along, huntsman Ermíl sees, on the drowned man's grave, a young ram strolling about,—such a white, curly, pretty little ram. So Ermíl thinks to himself: 'I 'll catch him,—why should he be wasted like this?'—so he slipped off his horse, and took him in his hands. . . . But the ram did n't mind it at all. So Ermíl goes to his horse, but the horse opens his eyes wide and stares, and neighs and tosses his head; but he untied it, mounted, and the ram with him, and started off again: he held the young ram in front of him. He looked at it, and the ram just stared him straight in the eye. He began to feel uneasy, did Ermíl the huntsman: 'I don't remember ever to have heard,' says he, 'that rams stared folks in the eye in this fashion;' however, he did n't mind; he began to stroke its fur,—and says he: 'Ba-a, ba-a!' And all of a sudden, the ram showed his teeth, and says to him the same: 'Ba-a, ba-a! . . .'"

Before the narrator could utter this last word, the two dogs suddenly rose with one impulse, rushed away from the fire, barking convulsively, and vanished into the darkness. All the boys were thoroughly frightened. Ványa jumped out from under his mat. Pavlúshka flew after

the dogs with a yell. Their barking swiftly retreated into the distance. . . . The uneasy running to and fro of the startled herd of horses was audible. Pavlúsha shouted loudly: "Grey! Beetle!" . . . . . In a few moments, the barking ceased; Pável's voice was already wafted to us from afar. . . . . A little more time elapsed; the boys exchanged glances of bewilderment, as though anticipating that something was about to happen. . . . Suddenly the hoof-beats of a galloping horse became audible; it stopped abruptly at the very fire, and Pavlúsha, who had been clinging to its mane, leaped from its back. The two dogs also sprang into the circle of light, and immediately sat down, lolling out their red tongues.

"What was it yonder? What was the matter?"—asked the boys.

"Nothing," — replied Pável, waving his hand toward the horse:—"'t was just that the dogs scented something. I thought it was a wolf,"—he added in an indifferent voice, breathing fast, with the full capacity of his chest.

I involuntarily admired Pavlúsha. He was very handsome at that moment. His ugly face, animated by the swift ride, blazed with dashing gallantry and firm resolution. Without even a switch in his hand, he had darted off alone, by night, without the slightest hesitation, to en-

counter a wolf. . . . . "What a splendid boy!" I thought, as I gazed at him.

"And have you seen them,—the wolves, I mean?"—asked cowardly Kóstya.

"There are always a lot of them here,"—replied Pável:—"but they are uneasy only in winter."

Again he curled up in front of the fire. As he seated himself on the ground, he dropped his hand on the shaggy neck of one of the dogs, and for a long time the delighted animal did not turn its head, as it gazed sidelong, with grateful pride, at Pavlúsha.

Ványa cuddled up under his mat again.

"What were those horrors thou wert narrating to us, Iliúsha?"—began Fédya, to whose lot, as the son of a wealthy peasant, it fell to act the part of leader (he himself said very little, as though he were afraid of lowering his dignity). —"And 't was the Evil One who prompted the dogs to set up that barking. . . . But, in fact, I have heard that that locality of yours is unhallowed."

"Varnávitzy? . . . . I should say so! unhallowed the worst way! The old master has been seen there more than once, they say—the deceased master. He wears a long-skirted dressing-gown, they say, and keeps sighing all the while, as though he were hunting for something on the ground. Grandaddy Trofímitch met him

once.—'What is it, dear little father, Iván Iványitch,' says he, 'that thou art searching for on the ground?'"

"He asked him that?"—interrupted the astounded Fédya.

"Yes, he asked him."

"Well, Trofímitch is a gallant fellow to do that. . . . Well, and what happened?"

"'I 'm looking for the saxifrage,' says he. And he talks in such a dull, dull voice:—'The saxifrage.'[1]—'And what dost thou want of saxifrage, dear little father, Iván Ivánitch?'—'My grave is crushing me, crushing me, Trofímitch; I want to get out, to get out. . . . . .'"

"What a fellow!"—remarked Fédya;—"Probably he had n't lived long enough."

"What a marvel!" said Kóstya:—"I thought dead folks could be seen only on Relatives' Saturday."[2]

"Dead folks can be seen at any hour,"—confidently put in Iliúsha, who, so far as I was able to observe, was better acquainted than the rest with all the rural superstitions. . . . . "But on

[1] Literally, rend-rock—the rock-splitting plant.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] Certain Saturdays in the year, on which requiem services are held for dead relatives. One such Saturday occurs in Lent; another in the autumn, called "Dmítry's Day," when dead ancestors in general, and in particular those who fell on that day in the battle of Kulikovo, 1380, under Prince Dmítry 'Donskóy' (of the Don), which broke the Tatár yoke, are commemorated. But the one particularly referred to here is that which precedes Pentecost (Trinity Sunday and the Day of the Spirit, Monday).—TRANSLATOR.

Relatives' Saturday you can also see the living person whose turn it is to die that year. All you have to do is to sit on the church porch, and keep staring at the road; and those who are destined to die that year will pass by. Peasant-wife Uliyána, of our village, went and sat on the church porch last year."

"Well, and did she see any one?"—inquired Kóstya, with interest.

"Of course she did. At first, she sat there a long, long time, without seeing or hearing anybody . . . . but a dog seemed to keep barking and barking somewhere or other. . . . . All at once, she looks, and a little boy, with nothing on but his shirt, comes walking along the path. She looked closely—'t was Iváshka Feodósyeff . . ."

"The one who died last spring?"—interrupted Fédya.

"The very same. He was walking along, without raising his little head. . . . And Uliyána recognised him. . . But then she looked again, and a woman was coming along. She stared and stared,—akh, O Lord!—'t was she herself, Uliyána herself, who was coming along the road."

"Was it really she herself?"—asked Fédya.

"God is my witness, it was."

"Well, what of it?—she is n't dead yet, you know."

"But the year is n't over yet. Just take a look at her: she 's on the point of death."

All relapsed into silence again. Pável flung a handful of dry twigs on the fire. They turned sharply black with the suddenly upflaring flame, crackled, began to smoke, and set to writhing, thrusting upward their singed tips. The reflection of the fire darted out in all directions, with abrupt flickerings, especially upward. All at once, from somewhere or other, a white pigeon flew straight into this reflection, circled with affright in one spot, all flooded with the hot glare, and disappeared, with flapping wings.

"It must have escaped from home,"—remarked Pável.—"Now it will fly until it hits against something, and it will spend the night, until daybreak, on whatever it hits against."

"See here, Pavlúsha,"—said Kóstya:—"is n't it true, that it was a spirit flying to heaven, hey?"

Pável tossed another handful of twigs on the fire.

"Perhaps so,"—he said at last.

"But tell me, please, Pavlúsha,"—began Fédya:—"was the heavenly vision [1] visible also with you in Shalámovo?"

"When the sun was invisible? Certainly."

"You must have been frightened too, I think?"

"Well, we were n't the only ones. Our master, although he had explained to us beforehand that we should see a vision, was so scared himself, they say, when it began to grow dark, that he

[1] That is what our peasants call an eclipse of the sun.

was beside himself with fear. And in the house-serfs' cottage, the peasant-wife cook, just as soon as it began to grow dark, I hear, took and smashed all the pots in the oven with the oven-fork. 'Who wants to eat now?' says she: 'the day of judgment has come.' And such rumours were circulating in our village, brother,—to the effect that white wolves would overrun the earth, and eat up the people, a bird of prey would swoop down, and then Tríshka himself would be seen." [1]

"What is that Tríshka?"—asked Kóstya.

"Dost not thou know?"—put in Iliúsha hotly:—"well, brother, whence comest thou that thou dost not know about Tríshka? You're great stay-at-homes in your village, that's what you are! Tríshka will be a wonderful man who will come, and he will be such a wonderful man that it will be impossible to catch him, and no one will be able to do anything to him: so wonderful will the man be. The peasants will want to seize him, for example: they will go out against him with cudgels, they will surround him, but he will avert their eyes,—he will avert their eyes in such a way, that they will slay each other. They will put him in prison, for example,—he will ask for a drink of water in a dipper: they will fetch him the dipper, and he will dive down into it, and that's the last they will ever see of him. They

[1] The belief in "Tríshka" is, probably, a reflection of the legend about Antichrist.

will put chains on him, but he will shake his hands and they will fall off him. Well, and that Tríshka will go through the villages and the towns; and that Tríshka, the cunning fellow, will lead astray the Christian race . . . . well, and they will not be able to do anything to him. . . . . He will be such a wonderful, such a crafty man."

" Well, yes,"—went on Pavlúsha, in his drawling voice:—" that 's the man. They 've been expecting him in our village too. The old folks said, that as soon as the heavenly vision began, Tríshka would come. So the vision began. All the people scattered out into the street, into the fields, to wait and see what would happen. And we have a conspicuous, extensive site, you know. They are gazing when, suddenly, down-hill from the town, comes some man or other, such a peculiar man, with such a wonderful head . . . they all shout out at once: ' Óï, Tríshka 's coming! óï, Tríshka 's coming!' but 't was nothing of the sort. Our elder crawled into the ditch; his wife got stuck fast in the board at the bottom of the gate, and yelled at the top of her voice; she scared her watch-dog so that it broke loose from its chain, and leaped over the wattled hedge, and fled off to the forest; and Kúzka's father, Dorofyéitch, sprang into the oats, and squatted down, and set to piping like a quail: he thought, perhaps, the enemy, the soul-spoiler, would have mercy on a mere bird. So they all set up a rum-

pus! . . . . But the man who was coming was our cooper, Vavíla; he had bought himself a new tub with handles, and had put the empty tub on his head."

All the boys burst out laughing, and again became silent for a moment, as it often happens with people who are conversing in the open air. I cast a glance around: the night reigned, sovereign, triumphant; the damp chill of late evening had given way to the dry warmth of midnight, and it still had long to lie like a soft coverlet over the slumbering fields; a long time still remained before the first lisp, the first fine dews of dawn. There was no moon in the sky: at that time it rose late. Innumerable golden stars seemed all to have glided softly, twinkling in emulation of one another, in the direction of the Milky Way, and, in truth, as you gazed at them, you yourself began to feel the headlong, uninterrupted onward flight of the earth. . . A strange, sharp, wailing cry suddenly rang out twice in succession over the river, and, after the lapse of a few seconds, was repeated farther away. . . .

Kóstya shuddered: . . . . . "What 's that?"

"That 's a heron screaming,"—returned Pável, composedly.

"A heron,"—repeated Kóstya. . . . "But what was it, Pavlúsha, that I heard last night,"—he added, after a short silence:—"perhaps thou knowest . . . . ."

"What didst thou hear?"

"Why, this is what I heard. I was going from Kámennaya-Gryáda [Stone-Ridge] to Shákhkino. First I kept altogether in our hazel-copse, and then went by the pool—thou knowest, at the place where it makes a sharp turn into the cliff,—there 's a deep pit there, you see, made by the spring freshets, which never dries up; it 's still all overgrown with reeds, you know; so, as I was walking past that water-hole, boys, somebody began to groan from that same hole, and so pitifully, so pitifully . . 'Oo-oo . . . oo-oo . . . oo-oo!' I was seized with such terror, my brothers: the hour was late, and the voice was so painful.—What could it have been? hey?"

"Thieves drowned Akím the forester in that pool the year before last,"—remarked Pavlúsha; —"so, perhaps, it was his soul wailing."

"Why, that must have been it, my brothers," —returned Kóstya, opening wide his eyes, which were huge already. . . . "I did n't know that they had drowned Akím in that pool: I would have been scared much worse."

"But they say there are small frogs,"—went on Pavlúsha,—"which cry out in that pitiful way."

"Frogs? well, no, it was n't frogs . . . which made that . . . . ." (The heron screamed again above the river).—"Deuce take it!"—ejacu-

lated Kóstya, involuntarily:—"it shrieks like the forest-demon."

"The forest-demon does n't shriek,—he 's dumb,"—put in Iliúsha:—"he only claps his hands and cracks . . . ."

"And hast thou seen him,—the forest-demon? I 'd like to know,"—Fédya interrupted him, sneeringly.

"No, I have n't, and God forbid that I should see him; but other folks have seen him. The other day now, he tricked a peasant; he led him on and on through the forest, and all the while round one and the self-same meadow. . . . . He barely got home by daylight."

"Well, and did he see him?"

"Yes. He says he stands so big, so big, and dark, and muffled up, behind a tree, as it were, so that you can't get a good look at him, as though he were hiding from the moon, and he stares and stares with his little eyes, and blinks them, and blinks . . . ."

"Do stop that!"—exclaimed Fédya, with a slight shudder, and a twitch of his shoulders:—"Pfu! . . . ."

"And why is this nasty crew distributed over the world?"—remarked Pável:—"really now, why?"

Again a pause ensued.

"Look, look, boys,"—suddenly rang out

Ványa's childish voice:—" Look at God's little stars, like bees swarming!"

He poked his fresh little face out from under the mat, propped himself on his little fist, and slowly raised on high his large, tranquil eyes. The eyes of all the little lads were raised to the sky, and were not soon lowered.

" Well, Ványa,"—began Fédya, affectionately:—" how about thy sister Aniútka,—is she well?"

" Yes,"—replied Ványa, with a slight lisp.

" Tell her, we want to know why she does n't come to see us."

" I don't know."

" Tell her that she must come."

" I 'll tell her."

" Tell her that I 'll give her a present."

" And wilt thou give me one too?"

" Yes, I 'll give thee one too."

Ványa sighed.

" Well, no, I don't want it. Better give it to her: she 's such a good girl."

And again Ványa laid his head on the ground. Pável rose, and took the empty kettle in his hand.

" Where art thou going?"—Fédya asked him.

" To the river to dip up some water. I want a drink of water."

The dogs rose and followed him.

" Look out, don't tumble into the river!"—shouted Iliúsha after him.

"Why should he tumble in?"—said Fédya:—"He 'll take care of himself."

"Yes, so he will. All sorts of things happen: he 'll stoop down and begin to dip up the water, and the water-sprite will grab him by the hand and pull him in to himself. Then people will begin to say: 'The little fellow tumbled into the water. . . .' Much he did! . . . . . Yo-onder, he has made his way in among the rushes," he added, listening.

The rushes, in fact, were moving,—"whispering," as they express it among us.

"And is it true,"—asked Kóstya:—"that Akulína the fool has been crazy ever since the time she was in the water?"

"Yes, ever since then. . . Just look at her now! But they say that before that, she used to be a beauty. The water-sprite spoiled her. He did n't expect, you see, that they would pull her out so soon. So he spoiled her, down on the bottom, at his own place."

(I had met that Akulína more than once myself. Covered with rags, frightfully thin, with a face as black as a coal, a confused look, and teeth eternally exposed in a grin, she would stamp up and down for hours in one and the self-same spot, somewhere on the highway, with her bony arms pressed tightly to her breast, and slowly shifting from one foot to the other, like a wild beast in a cage. She understood nothing that

was said to her, and only laughed convulsively from time to time.)

"But they say,"—went on Kóstya,—"that Akulína threw herself into the river, because her lover deceived her."

"That 's exactly why she did it."

"And dost thou remember Vásya?"—added Kóstya, sadly.

"What Vásya?"—inquired Fédya.

"Why, the one who was drowned,"—replied Kóstya. "What a boy he was! i-ikh, what a boy he was! His mother, Feklísta, how she did love him, that Vásya! And she seemed to have a presentiment, did Feklísta, that water would be his ruin. When Vásya used to go to the river with us boys, to bathe, in summer, she would just quiver all over. The other women did n't mind: they would go past with their wash-troughs themselves, waddling along, but Feklísta would set her trough[1] on the ground and begin to call to him. 'Come back,' says she, 'come back, light of my eyes! okh, come back, my dear little falcon!'—And how he came to get drowned, the Lord knows. He was playing on the shore, and his mother was there also, raking up the hay; all at once, she heard some one making bubbles in the water,—and behold, nothing but Vásya's little cap was floating on the water. Alas, ever

[1] The Russian peasant wash-tub is like a long, shallow trough, or chopping-tray, made of a halved and hollowed log.—TRANSLATOR.

since then, Feklísta has not been in her right mind:—she 'll come and lie down on that spot where he was drowned; she 'll lie there, brothers, and strike up a song,—you remember, Vásya always sang the same song,—so she will strike up that song, and weep, and weep, and complain bitterly to God . . . . ."

" Yonder comes Pavlúsha,"—said Fédya.

Pavlúsha came up to the fire with a full kettle in his hand.

" Well, boys,"—he began, after a brief pause: —" something is wrong."

" Why, what 's the matter? "—asked Kóstya, hastily.

" I have heard Vásya's voice."

All fairly shuddered.

" What dost thou mean, what dost thou mean? "—stammered Kóstya.

" God is my witness. No sooner had I begun to stoop down to the water, than suddenly I heard myself called by Vásya's little voice, and from under the water, as it were: ' Pavlúsha, hey there, Pavlúsha, come hither.' I went away. But I dipped up the water all the same."

" Akh, O my Lord! akh, O Lord! "—cried the little lads, crossing themselves.

" That was the water-sprite calling thee, for sure, Pável,"—added Fédya. . . " And we have just been talking about him,—about Vásya."

" Akh, 't is a bad omen,"—faltered Iliúsha.

"Come, 't is nothing, drop it!"—said Pável, decisively, and sat down again:—"you can't escape your fate."

The boys subsided into silence. It was evident that Pável's words had produced a profound impression upon them. They began to stretch themselves out in front of the fire, as though preparing to go to sleep.

"What 's that?"—asked Kóstya, suddenly, raising his head.

Pável listened intently.

"'T is the woodcock flying,—they are whistling."

"But whither are they flying?"

"Away yonder, where, they say, there is no winter."

"And is it possible that there is such a country?"

"There is."

"Is it far away?"

"Yes, far, far away, beyond the warm seas."

Kóstya sighed, and closed his eyes.

More than three hours had already elapsed since I had joined the boys. The moon rose at last: I did not immediately observe it, it was so small and slender. This moonless night, apparently, was as magnificent as before. . . . . But many stars which had but lately stood high in the heavens, were already sinking toward the dark rim of the earth; everything round about had be-

come perfectly quiet, as things generally do only toward dawn: everything was sleeping, with the deep, motionless slumber which precedes the break of day. The air was no longer so strongly perfumed,—it seemed to have again become impregnated with moisture. . . . Summer nights are not long! . . . The prattle of the little lads had died down with the bonfires. . . . The dogs, too, were sleeping; the horses, so far as I was able to make out by the barely-shining, faintly-spreading light of the stars, were also lying down, with drooping heads. . . . A light forgetfulness descended upon me; it passed into slumber.

A fresh current of air blew across my face. I opened my eyes:—morning was breaking. The dawn was not, as yet, glowing red anywhere, but the east was already beginning to grow white. Everything had become visible, though dimly visible, all around. The pale-grey sky was lighting up, turning cold and blue; the stars now twinkled with a faint light, now disappeared; the earth had grown damp, the foliage had begun to sweat; here and there living sounds, voices, were beginning to resound, and a thin, early breeze had begun to stray abroad and flutter over the earth. My body responded to it with a slight, cheerful shiver. I rose briskly to my feet, and walked toward the little boys. They were all sleeping like dead men around the smouldering

bonfire; Pável alone half-rose, and gazed intently at me.

I nodded my head to him and went my way, along the mist-wreathed river. Before I had proceeded two versts, there had streamed forth all around me over the wide, wet meadow, ahead of me, over the hills which were beginning to gleam green, from forest to forest, and behind me, over the long, dusty highway, over the glittering, crimson-tinted bushes, and the river, shyly glinting blue from beneath the dispersing fog—there had streamed forth first scarlet, then red, then golden torrents of young, blazing light. . . . . Everything began to stir, awoke, began to sing, to make a noise, to chatter. Everywhere, like radiant brilliants, glowed great dewdrops; the sounds of a bell were wafted toward me, pure and clear, as though they, also, had been washed by the morning freshness, and, suddenly, the rested herd of horses dashed headlong past me, driven by the lads I have mentioned. . . .

Unfortunately, I am bound to add that Pável died that same year. He was not drowned; he was killed by falling from a horse. 'T is a pity, for he was a splendid young fellow!

IX

KASYÁN FROM THE FAIR-METCHÁ [1]

I WAS returning home from the chase in a jolting peasant cart, and, overwhelmed by the stifling heat of the sultry, overcast summer's day (every one knows that, on such days, the heat is sometimes even more intolerable than on clear days, especially when there is no breeze), was dozing and rolling about, with surly impatience surrendering myself wholly to be devoured by the fine, white dust, which rose incessantly from the beaten road from beneath the disjointed and rickety wheels,—when, all of a sudden, my attention was aroused by the uneasiness and the agitated movements of the body of my coachman, who, up to that moment, had been even more sound asleep than myself. He was jerking at the reins, fidgeting about on the box, and began to shout at the horses, every now and then casting a glance to one side. I looked round. We were driving over a tilled plain; low hillocks, also tilled, ran athwart it, in remarkably steep, wave-like slopes; the eye could take in, at most, only about five versts of waste

[1] The Metchá is a river of Central Russia to which the epithet "Fair" is applied as "Dear little mother" *(Mátushka)* is to the Volga.—TRANSLATOR.

expanse; far away in the distance, small birch copses alone broke the almost straight line of the horizon with their rounded, yet jagged crests. Narrow paths stretched out through the fields, lost themselves in ravines, wound around swells of the land, and on one of them, which intersected our road about five hundred paces ahead of us, I descried some sort of procession. This was what my coachman was looking at.

It was a funeral. In front, in a peasant cart, drawn by one horse, rode the priest at a foot-pace; the chanter sat beside him and drove; behind the cart, four peasant men, with bared heads, bore the coffin, covered with white linen; two peasant women walked behind the coffin. The shrill, lugubrious voice of one of them reached my ears; I listened: she was wailing. Mournfully did that varying yet monotonous, hopelessly-sorrowful chant resound amid the empty fields. The coachman whipped up his horses: he wanted to get ahead of this procession. 'T is a bad omen to meet a funeral on the road. As a matter of fact, he did succeed in galloping past along the road before the corpse managed to reach it; but we had not proceeded a hundred paces, when, all at once, our cart gave a violent lurch, careened on one side, and almost toppled over. The coachman pulled up his horses, which had started to run away, waved his hand in despair, and spat.

"What 's the matter?"—I asked.

My coachman alighted in silence, and without haste.

"But what 's the matter?"

"The axletree is broken . . . . . burned through,"—he replied gloomily, and suddenly adjusted the breeching on the trace-horse with such indignation that the horse came near going over on its side, but retained its footing, snorted, shook itself, and began very calmly to scratch itself with its teeth below the knee of the right leg.

I alighted, and stood for some time in the road, confusedly absorbed by a feeling of disagreeable surprise. The right wheel was turned almost completely under the cart, and seemed to have elevated its hub on high, in dumb despair.

"What is to be done now?"—I asked, at last.

"Yonder 's the one who is to blame!"—said my coachman, pointing with his whip at the procession, which had already had time to turn into the highway, and was approaching us:—"I 've always noticed it,"—he continued:—"'T is a sure sign—to meet a corpse. . . . . Yes."

And again he worried the trace-horse who, perceiving his displeasure and harshness, decided to remain impassive, and only swished its tail modestly from time to time. I walked back and forth for a while, and again came to a halt in front of the wheel.

In the meantime, the corpse had overtaken us.

Turning out peaceably from the road upon the grass, the mournful procession passed our cart. The coachman and I removed our caps, exchanged bows with the priest, and glances with the bearers. They walked with difficulty; their broad chests heaved high. Of the two women who walked behind the coffin, one was very aged and pale; her impassive features, cruelly distorted with grief, retained an expression of strict, rigorous dignity. She walked on in silence, from time to time raising her gaunt hand to her thin, sunken lips. The eyes of the other woman, a young one about five-and-twenty years of age, were red and moist, and her whole face was swollen with weeping; as they came alongside of us, she ceased to wail, and covered her face with her sleeve. . . . . But now the corpse had passed us, had turned out again into the highway, and her mournful, soul-breaking chant rang out once more. Having silently gazed after the coffin, as it rocked with regular motion, my coachman turned to me.

"'T is Martýn the carpenter they 're burying," —said he:—"the one from Ryábaya."

"How dost thou know that?"

"I found it out by the women. The old one is his mother, and the young one is his wife."

"Was he ill?"

"Yes . . . . he had the fever. . . . . The overseer sent for the doctor day before yesterday,

but they did n't find the doctor at home. . . . . And he was a good carpenter; rather given to drinking, but a fine carpenter he was. You see how that woman of his is killing herself. . . . . Well, yes, 't is well known: women's tears are cheap. Women's tears are just the same as water. . . . . Yes."

And he bent down, crawled under the rein of the trace-horse, and seized the arch with both hands.[1]

" But,"—I remarked:—" what are we to do? "

My coachman first braced his knee against the shoulder of the shaft-horse, shook the arch a couple of times, adjusted the saddle, then crawled back again under the rein of the trace-horse, and, giving it a shove in the muzzle in passing, he stepped up to the wheel—stepped up to it, and, without removing his gaze from it, pulled from beneath the skirts of his coat a birch-bark snuff-box, slowly tugged at the strap on its cover, slowly thrust his two thick fingers into the snuff-box (and it would hardly hold two), kneaded and kneaded the snuff, puckered up his nose in advance, inhaled the snuff with pauses between, accompanying each sniff with a prolonged grunt, and, screwing up his lids in a painful way, and blinking his tearful eyes, he plunged into profound meditation.

[1] The arch connecting the shafts, over the neck of the trotter. The side horses (sometimes only one is used, instead of two) are very slightly attached by traces.—Translator.

"Well, what now?"—I said at last.

My coachman carefully replaced the snuff-box in his pocket, pulled his cap down on his eyebrows, without using his hands, with a movement of his head alone, and thoughtfully climbed upon his box.

"Whither art thou going?"—I asked him, not without surprise.

"Please take your seat,"—he replied calmly, and gathered up the reins.

"But how are we going to drive?"

"We 'll drive on all right, sir."

"But the axle. . . ."

"Please take your seat."

"But the axle is broken . . . . ."

"'T is broken, yes, 't is broken; but we shall manage to get to the settlement . . . . at a walk,—that is to say, yonder, behind the grove, there are dwellings: 't is called Yúdino."

"And dost thou think that we can get there?"

My coachman did not vouchsafe me an answer.

"I would rather go afoot,"—said I.

"As you please, sir. . . . ."

And he flourished his whip. The horses started.

We really did reach the settlement, although the right front wheel hardly held, and revolved in a remarkably strange manner. On one hillock, it came near flying off; but my coachman shouted

in a vicious voice, and we made the descent in safety.

The Yúdino hamlet consisted of six tiny, low-roofed cottages, which had already managed to sag down to one side, although, in all probability, they had been erected not long before; not all their yards were enclosed with wattled hedges. As we drove into this settlement, we encountered not a single living soul: there were no hens, nor dogs even, visible in the street: only one black dog, with a bob-tail, sprang out at our appearance, from a completely dried trough, where it must have been driven by thirst, and immediately, without barking, darted headlong under a gate. I entered the first cottage, opened the door into the anteroom, called for the owners,—no one answered me. I shouted a second time: the hungry mewing of a cat resounded on the other side of the door. I pushed it open with my foot; an emaciated cat slipped quickly past me, her green eyes flashing in the dark. I put my head into the room, and looked: it was dark, smoky, and empty. I betook myself to the back yard, and there was no one there, either. . . . A calf was bleating in the paddock; a lame, grey goose was hobbling about a little to one side. I went on to the second cottage,—and there was not a soul in the second cottage. I went to the yard . . . . . .

In the very middle of the brightly illuminated yard, in the very heart of the heat, as the expres-

sion is, there was lying, as it seemed to me, a small boy, face to the ground, his head covered with his long peasant coat. A few paces from him, beside a wretched little cart, stood an emaciated horse in a tattered harness under a thatched shed. The sunlight, falling in streams through the narrow interstices of the rickety penthouse roof, streaked its shaggy, reddish-brown hide with small, bright blotches. There, also, in a lofty bird-house, the starlings were chattering, staring down with calm curiosity from their aërial little dwelling. I went up to the sleeper, and began to rouse him. . . . .

He raised his head, saw me, and immediately sprang to his feet. . . . "What is it, what 's wanted? What 's the matter?" he muttered, half-awake.

I did not answer him on the instant: so astonished was I by his personal appearance. Picture to yourself a dwarf fifty years of age, with a tiny, swarthy, wrinkled face, a sharp-pointed little nose, small, brown, hardly visible eyes, and thick, curly black hair, which sat on his tiny head like the broad cap on a mushroom.

His whole body was extremely puny and thin, and it is absolutely impossible to convey in words how strange and remarkable was his glance.

"What 's wanted?"—he asked me again.

I explained to him the state of the case; he lis-

tened to me, never taking his slowly blinking eyes off me.

"Cannot we obtain a new axle?"—I said at last:—"I should be glad to pay for it."

"But who are you? sportsmen?"—he inquired, surveying me from head to foot with a glance.

"Yes."

"You shoot the birds of heaven, I suppose? . . and wild beasts? . . . . And don't you think it is a sin to slay God's birds, to shed innocent blood?"

The queer little old man spoke with great deliberation. The sound of his voice also surprised me. Not only was there nothing infirm audible in it,—it was wonderfully sweet, youthful, and almost effeminately tender.

"I have no axle,"—he added, after a brief pause:—"that one yonder is of no use"—(he pointed at his little cart)—"you have a large cart, I suppose?"

"And cannot one be found in the village?"

"What sort of a village do you call this! . . . No one here has one. . . And there 's no one at home, either: they are all at work. Go your way,"—he said suddenly, and lay down again on the ground.

I had not in the least expected this termination.

"Listen, old man,"—I began, touching his shoulder:—"please to help me."

"Go your way, and God be with you! I 'm

tired: I 've been to the town,"—he said to me, and dragged his coat over his head.

" But please do me the favour,"—I went on:—" I . . . I will pay."

" I don't want thy pay."

" But please, old man . . . ."

He half raised himself, and sat up, with his thin little legs crossed.

" I might guide thee to the place where they are felling timber. Some merchants have bought our grove,—may God judge them, they are carrying off our grove, and have built an office,—may God be their judge! Perhaps thou couldst order an axle of them there, or buy one ready-made."

" Capital! "—I exclaimed joyously. . . " The very thing! . . . let us go."

" An oaken axle, a good one,"—he went on, without rising from his place.

" And is it far to the timber-felling place? "

" Three versts."

" Well, never mind! We can drive there in thy cart."

" But you can't . . . ."

" Come along, let 's start,"—said I.—" Let 's start, old man! My coachman is waiting for us in the street."

The old man rose reluctantly, and followed me to the street. My coachman was in an exasperated state of mind: he had undertaken to water his horses, but there turned out to be extremely

little water in the well, and it had a bad flavour, which, so coachmen say, is of prime importance. . . . Nevertheless, at the sight of the old man, he grinned, nodded his head, and exclaimed:

"Ah, Kasyánushka! morning!"

"Morning, Eroféi, upright man!"—replied Kasyán, in a dejected voice.

I immediately communicated his proposition to the coachman; Eroféi expressed his assent, and drove into the yard. While he, with deliberate bustle, unharnessed his horses, the old man stood, with his shoulders leaning against the gate, and stared uncheerfully now at him, now at me. He seemed, somehow, perplexed: he was not overjoyed at our appearance, so far as I could observe.

"And dost thou mean to say that they have sent thee too off here to settle?"—asked Eroféi, suddenly, as he removed the arch from the shaft-horse.

"Me too."

"Ekh!"—said my coachman through his teeth. —"Knowest thou Martýn the carpenter . . . for thou dost know Martýn from Ryábaya, of course?"

"I do."

"Well, he 's dead. We have just met his coffin."

Kasyán shuddered.

"He 's dead?"—he said, and dropped his eyes.

"Yes, he is dead. Why didst not thou cure

him, hey? For they say that thou dost cure, that thou art a healer."

My coachman was, evidently, amusing himself, ridiculing the old man.

"And is this thy cart?"—he added, indicating it with his shoulder.

"Yes."

"Well, what a cart! . . . . d'ye call that a cart?"—he repeated, and taking it by the shafts, he almost turned it upside down. . . . . "A cart! . . . And what are you going to drive to the clearing in? . . . . You can't harness our horse in these shafts: our horses are large,—and what do you call that?"

"I don't know,"—replied Kasyán,—"what you will ride in: perhaps on that little beast yonder,"—he added, with a sigh.

"On that one, dost thou mean?"—put in Eroféi, and stepping up to Kasyán's wretched nag, he poked it disdainfully in the neck with the third finger of his right hand.—"Humph,"—he added reproachfully:—"it's fast asleep, the idiot!"

I requested Eroféi to harness it to the cart as speedily as possible. I wanted to drive with Kasyán to the clearing: partridges are frequently to be found at such spots. When the cart was quite ready, and I had contrived, somehow or other, to ensconce myself and my dog on its warped, linden-bark bottom, and Kasyán, curling himself up

in a ball and with his previous dejected expression on his face, had also taken his seat, on the front rim,—Eroféi approached me, and with a mysterious aspect whispered:

"And well have you done, dear little father, in driving with him. For he 's that sort of a man, he 's a holy fool,[1] and his nickname is—The Flea. I don't know how you managed to understand him. . . . ." I wanted to remark to Eroféi, that, so far, Kasyán had seemed to me to be a very sensible man; but my coachman immediately proceeded, in the same tone:

"Just you keep a sharp watch, to see that he takes you to the right place. And please to pick out the axle yourself: please to get as healthy an axle as possible. . . . .

"How now, Flea,"—he added aloud:—"can a body get a bit of bread from you?"

"Seek: perchance, it may be found,"—replied Kasyán, jerking the reins, and we drove off.

His little horse, to my sincere amazement, went far from badly. During the entire course of our drive, Kasyán preserved an obstinate silence, and to my questions replied abruptly and reluctantly. We soon reached the felling-place, and there betook ourselves to the office, a lofty cottage, which stood [illegible] above a small ravine that had been [illegible] by a dam and converted into a

[1] Simple-minded eccentrics, are greatly respected at the present day in Russia.—Translator.

pond. In that office I found two young merchants' clerks, with snow-white teeth, sweet eyes, sweet, alert speech, and sweetly-wily little smiles, struck a bargain with them for an axle, and set off for the clearing. I thought that Kasyán would remain with the horse, and wait for me; but he suddenly stepped up to me.

"Art thou going to shoot birds?"—he began:—"hey?"

"Yes, if I find any."

"I 'll go with thee. . . . May I?".

"Yes, thou mayest."

And he went.—The area which had been cleared was, altogether, about a verst in extent. I must confess, that I looked more at Kasyán than at my dog. Not without reason was he called The Flea. His black, wholly uncovered head (moreover, his hair was a fine substitute for any cap) fairly hopped through the bushes. He walked with remarkable briskness, and kept constantly skipping, as it were, as he walked, bent down incessantly, plucked some weeds or other, thrust them into his bosom, muttered to himself, and kept looking at me and my dog, with a very strange, searching glance. In the low bushes, in the undergrowth, and on clearings there dwell small grey birds, which are incessantly flitting from tree to tree and chirping, suddenly swooping in flight. Kasyán mimicked them, and answered their calls; a young quail flew up, twitter-

ing, from under his very feet,—he twittered back to it; a lark began to descend above him, fluttering its wings and warbling loudly,—Kasyán joined in its song. With me he still would not talk. . .

The weather was magnificent, still finer than before; but the heat did not abate. Athwart the clear sky floated infrequent, high-hanging clouds of a yellowish-white hue, like late-lying snow in spring, flat and long, like reefed sails. Their fancifully-patterned edges, light and downy as cotton, slowly but visibly changed with every passing moment: they melted away, those clouds, and no shadow fell from them. Kasyán and I roamed for a long time about the clearing. The young shoots, which had not, as yet, managed to extend themselves longer than an arshín,[1] surrounded with their smooth, slender stems the low, blackened stumps; round, spongy excrescences with grey borders, those same punk-growths from which tinder is made, clung close to the stumps; the strawberry had sent forth its rosy tendrils over them; and mushrooms sat there also, close-crowded in families. One's feet were incessantly entangled and held fast in the long grass, dried through and through by the burning sun; everywhere the eyes were dazzled by the sharp, metallic glitter of the young, reddish leaves on the

[1] Twenty-eight inches—the Russian measure corresponding to the yard.—TRANSLATOR.

trees; all about, the blue clusters of the vetch, the golden chalices of the buttercups, the half-purple half-yellow flowers of John-and-Mary [1] formed a gay-coloured carpet; here and there, alongside the abandoned paths, whereon the traces of wheels were indicated by streaks of a fine, red weed, rose piles of firewood blackened by wind and rain, each containing a cord; a faint shadow was cast by their slanting corners,—there was no other shadow anywhere. A light breeze now woke up, now subsided: it would suddenly blow straight in my face, and frolic, as it were,—rustle merrily, nod and flutter around, gracefully rock the slender tips of the ferns,—and I would rejoice in it . . . but, lo, it has died down, and everything is calm again. Only the grasshoppers shrilled vigorously, as though angry,—and that uninterrupted, harsh, piercing sound is fatiguing. It is suited to the importunate heat of midday; it seems to be born of it, evoked by it, as it were, from the red-hot earth.

At last, without having hit upon a single lair of game, we reached the new clearing. There the recently felled aspens lay sadly on the ground, crushing the grass and the undergrowth; on some, leaves still green, but already dead, hung limply from the motionless boughs; on others, they had already dried and curled up. From the

[1] A mint-like plant which has bright-purple leaves and stems and bright-yellow flowers, called "Iván-da-Márya."—Translator.

fresh, golden-white chips, which lay in heaps around the brilliantly moist stumps, there was exhaled an extremely agreeable, bitter odour. Far away, nearer the grove, the axes were tapping dully, and, at times, solemnly and quietly, as though bowing and spreading out its arms, a curly-foliaged tree sank earthward.

For a long time, I found no game; at last, out of a spreading oak-bush, through the wormwood with which it was overgrown, a corncrake flew forth. I fired; it turned a somersault in the air, and fell. On hearing the shot, Kasyán swiftly covered his eyes with his hand, and did not move until I had reloaded my gun and picked up the corncrake. But when I started onward, he went up to the spot where the dead bird had fallen, bent down to the grass, on which a few drops of blood were sprinkled, shook his head, cast a frightened glance at me. . . . . Afterward, I heard him whispering: "A sin! . . . . Akh, this is a sin!"

The heat made us, at last, enter the grove. I threw myself down under a tall hazel-bush, over which a stately young maple spread finely abroad its light branches. Kasyán seated himself on the thick end of a felled birch-tree. I looked at him. The foliage was swaying faintly up aloft, and its liquid greenish shadows slipped gently back and forth over his puny body, wrapped up, after a fashion, in his dark coat, over his small face. He did not raise his head. Bored by his taciturnity,

I lay on my back, and began to admire the peaceful play of the tangled leaves against the far-off brilliant sky. 'T is a wonderfully agreeable occupation, to lie on one's back in the forest, and stare upward! It seems to you as though you were gazing into a bottomless sea, that it spreads broadly beneath you, that the trees do not rise out of the earth, but, like the roots of huge plants, descend, hang suspended, in those crystal-clear waves; the leaves on the trees now are of translucent emerald, again thicken into golden, almost black green. Somewhere, far away, terminating a slender branch, a separate leaf stands motionless against the blue patch of transparent sky, and by its side sways another, recalling by its movements the play of a fish's gills, as though the movement proceeded from its own volition, and were not produced by the breeze. The white, round clouds softly float and softly pass, like enchanted submarine islands,—and then, all of a sudden, that whole sea, that radiant atmosphere, those boughs and leaves flooded with sunlight, begin to undulate, to tremble with a fugitive gleam, and a fresh, hurried lisping, resembling the unending, tiny plash of swelling surge, arises. You do not stir —you gaze: and it is impossible to express in words what joy, tranquillity, and sweetness reign in your heart. You gaze:—that deep, pure azure evokes a smile upon your lips, as innocent as itself; as the clouds sail over the sky, and in

their company, as it were, happy memories pass in garlands through your soul, and it seems to you that your gaze recedes further and further away, and draws you after it, into that calm, beaming abyss, and that it is impossible to tear yourself from that height, from that depth....

"Master, hey there, master!"—said Kasyán, suddenly, in his melodious voice.

I half-rose with amazement; hitherto, he had barely answered my questions, and now he had suddenly begun to speak of his own accord.

"What dost thou want?"—I asked.

"Well, why didst thou kill that bird?"—he began, looking me straight in the face.

"What dost thou mean by 'why'?.... The corncrake is game: it can be eaten."

"That 's not the reason why thou didst kill it, master: much thou wilt eat it! Thou hast killed it for thine amusement."

"Why, surely, thou thyself, I suppose, dost eat geese and chickens?"

"That is a bird appointed by God for man, but the corncrake is a free bird, a forest bird. And not he alone: there are quantities of them, of all sorts of forest creatures, and creatures of the field, and the river, and the swamp, both up-stream and down-stream,—and 't is a sin to kill them, and they ought to be allowed to live on the earth until their time comes.... But another food is appointed to man, a different food and a different

drink: grain is God's blessed gift, and the waters of heaven, and tame fowl, from our ancient fathers' day."

I stared in amazement at Kasyán. His words flowed fluently; he did not pause to seek them, he spoke with quiet enthusiasm and gentle dignity, closing his eyes from time to time.

" And so, according to thy view, it is sinful to kill a fish, also? "—I asked.

" A fish has cold blood,"—he returned, with confidence:—" a fish is a dumb brute. It does not fear, it does not rejoice: a fish is a creature without the power of speech. A fish does not feel, the blood in it is not lively. . . Blood,"—he went on, after a pause,—" is a holy thing! Blood does not behold God's dear little sun, blood hides itself from the light . . . 't is a great sin to show blood to the light, a great sin and horror. . . . Okh, very great! "

He sighed, and cast down his eyes. I must admit, that I stared at the strange old man in utter amazement. His speech did not have the ring of a peasant: the common people do not speak like that, neither do fine talkers. This language was thoughtfully-solemn and strange. . . . I had never heard anything like it.

" Tell me, please, Kasyán,"—I began, without taking my eyes from his slightly-flushed face:—" what is thy occupation? "

He did not at once answer my question. His gaze roved uneasily for a moment.

"I live as the Lord commands,"—he said at last,—"and, as for an occupation,—no, I have none. I have n't had much sense since my childhood; I work, as long as my strength lasts,—I 'm a poor workman . . . . how should I be otherwise! I have no health, and my hands are stupid. Well, and in springtime I snare nightingales."

"Thou snarest nightingales?—But didst not thou say, that one should not touch any creature of the forest or the field, and so forth?"

"They must not be killed, that is true; death will take his own, in any case. There 's Martýn the carpenter, for example: Martýn lived and did not live long, and died; now his wife is wasting away with sorrow over her husband and her little children. . . . Neither man nor beast can cheat death. Death does not run, and you cannot run from it; but you must n't aid it. And I don't kill the nightingales,—the Lord forbid! I don't catch them for torture, nor for the destruction of their life, but for man's pleasure, consolation, and delectation."

"Dost thou go to Kursk [1] to catch them?"

"I do go to Kursk, and even further, as it happens. I pass the night in the marshes, and

[1] The nightingales of the Kursk Government are accounted the finest in Russia.—TRANSLATOR.

on the borders of the forest; I spend the night alone in the fields, in the wilds: there the snipe whistle, there the hares cry, there the wild drakes quack.—In the evening I observe, in the morning I listen, at dawn I spread my nets over the bushes. . . . . Sometimes a nightingale sings so mournfully, so sweetly . . . . even mournfully."

"And dost thou sell them?"

"I give them away to good people."

"And what else dost thou do?"

"What do I do?"

"What is thy business?"

The old man remained silent a while.

"I have no business. . . . I 'm a bad workman. But I can read and write."

"Thou canst?"

"I can. The Lord, and good people, have aided me."

"Well, art thou a family man?"

"No, I have no family."

"How is that? . . . Have they all died?"

"No, it just happened so; it did n't chance to be my luck in life. But that is all under God's care, we all go under God's care; and a man must be upright,—so he must! He must please God, that is to say."

"And hast thou no relatives?"

"I have . . . yes . . . . in a way . . ."

The old man stammered.

"Tell me, please,"—I began:—"I heard my coachman ask thee, why thou didst not heal Martýn? Dost thou know how to heal?"

"Thy coachman is an upright man,"—Kasyán answered me, thoughtfully:—"but he is not without sin also. They call me a physician... I a physician, forsooth! .... and who can cure? All that comes from God. But there are ... there are plants, there are flowers: they do help, really. Here 's the bur-marigold, for example; 't is a good weed for man: here 's the plantain, too; 't is no disgrace to speak of them; they are clean plants—God's plants. Well, but others are not like that: and they help, but 't is a sin; and 't is a sin to speak of them. It might be done with prayer, perhaps. .... Well, of course, there are words which .... And he who believes shall be saved,"—he added, lowering his voice.

"Didst thou not give Martýn anything?"—I asked.

"I heard of it too late,"—replied the old man.—"But what of that!—each one will get what is written in his fate. Martýn was not destined to live long on earth: that 's a fact. No, the dear sun does not warm a man who is not fated to live long on earth, as it does other men, and neither does his bread profit him,—'t is as though something summoned him away.... Yes; Lord rest his soul!"

"Is it long since they sent you to live in our parts?"—I asked him, after a brief silence.

Kasyán gave a start.

"No, not long: four years. In the old master's time, we always lived in our former place, but the Council of Guardians removed us. Our old master was a gentle soul, a meek man,—the kingdom of heaven be his! Well, the Council of Guardians judged rightly, of course; 't is evident, that so it was right."

"But where did you formerly live?"

"We are from the Fair-Metchá."

"Is that far from here?"

"About a hundred versts."

"And was it better than here?"

"Yes . . . 't was better. There the lands were fertile river-meadows, our nest; but here we have cramped lands, and drought. . . . We are orphaned here. Yonder, at our Fair-Metchá you would climb a hill, and climb—and, O Lord my God, what did you see? hey? River, and meadows, and forest; and there was a church there, and then the meadows began again, you could see far, far away. How far you could see! . . . you gaze and gaze,—akh, truly, you cannot express your feelings! Well, here, to tell the truth, the land is better: clay, good clay, say the peasants; and my grain bears well everywhere."

"Come, old man, tell me the truth: I think thou wouldst like to visit thy native place?"

"Yes, I would like to have a look at it. But 't is good everywhere. I 'm a man without a family, a rover. Well, and that 's nothing! can one sit much at home? But when you walk, when you walk," he interposed, raising his voice, "your heart is lighter, in truth. The dear little sun lights you, and you are more visible to God, and can sing in better tune. You look to see what grass is growing; well, you observe it, you pluck it. The water flows fresh from a spring, for example: holy water; so you drink your fill,—you note it also. The heavenly birds sing. . . And then, beyond Kursk lie steppes, such level steppes, and there is wonder and satisfaction for a man, there is liberty, there is God's grace! And they extend, so people say, clear to the warm seas, where the bird Gamáiun the sweet-voiced dwells, and the leaves do not fall from the trees in winter, nor in autumn, and golden apples grow on silver boughs, and every man lives in abundance and uprightness. . . For I 've been in ever so many places! I 've been to Romyón, and in Simbírsk the splendid town, and in golden-domed Moscow too; I 've been on our benefactress the Oká River, and on the Tzna, the darling, and on dear little mother Volga, and have seen many people, kind peasants, and have tarried in honourable towns. . . . Well, I would like to go thither—and you see . . . . and yet . . . . And I 'm not the only sinful one . . . . many other peasants

wear linden-bark slippers, roam about the world, seek the truth . . . . yes! . . . . But as for home, hey? There 's no uprightness in man—that there is n't. . . . ."

These last words Kasyán uttered rapidly, almost unintelligibly; then he said something more, which I could not catch, and his face assumed such a strange expression, that I involuntarily recalled the appellation " holy fool." He cast down his eyes, cleared his throat, and seemed to recover himself.

" What a dear little sun! "—he said in an undertone:—" What grace,—O Lord! what warmth in the forest! "

He shrugged his shoulders, paused for a moment, glanced abstractedly about, and began to sing softly. I could not catch all the words of his drawling song; but I heard the following:

" They call me Kasyán,
Nicknamed The Flea. . . ."

" Eh! "—thought I:—" why, he 's improvising." . . . . All at once he started, and stopped short, staring intently into the dense part of the forest. I turned round, and perceived a small peasant maiden, ten years of age, in a little blue sarafán,[1] with a checked kerchief on her head,

[1] The true peasant gown, gathered full on a band, falling in straight folds from the armpits, and supported by cross-bands over the shoulders.—TRANSLATOR.

and a plaited basket in her bare, sunburned hand. She had, probably, not in the least expected to encounter us; she had hit on us, as the expression is, and stood motionless in a green clump of hazel-bushes in a shady little glade, timidly gazing at me with her black eyes. I barely managed to survey her; she immediately ducked behind a tree.

"Ánnushka! Ánnushka! come hither, fear not,"—called the old man, affectionately.

"I 'm afraid,"—resounded a shrill little voice.

"Don't be afraid, come to me."

Ánnushka silently abandoned her ambush, softly made the circuit of it,—her childish footsteps were hardly audible on the thick grass,—and emerged from the thicket close to the old man. She was not a child of eight, as she had seemed to me at first, from her stunted growth, but of thirteen or fourteeen. Her whole body was small and thin, but very well made and agile, and her pretty little face bore a remarkable resemblance to that of Kasyán, although Kasyán was not a beauty. There were the same sharp features, the same strange gaze, cunning and confiding, thoughtful and piercing, and the movements were the same. . . . Kasyán ran his eyes over her; she was standing with her side to him.

"Well, hast thou been gathering mushrooms?"—he asked.

"Yes, mushrooms,"—she replied, with a shy smile.

"Hast thou found many?"

"Yes." (She darted a swift glance at him, and smiled again.)

"And are there any white ones?"

"Yes, some are white."

"Show them, show them." . . . (She lowered the basket from her arm and half-raised a broad burdock leaf, which covered the mushrooms.)—"Eh!"—said Kasyán, bending over the basket; "why, what splendid ones! Good for thee, Ánnushka!"

"Is this thy daughter, Kasyán?"—I asked. (Ánnushka's face flushed faintly.)

"No, just a relative,"—said Kasyán, with feigned carelessness.—"Well, run along, Ánnushka,"—he immediately added:—"run along, and God be with thee. And see here . . . ."

"But why should she go afoot?"—I interrupted him.—"We will drive her with us."

Ánnushka flushed as scarlet as a poppy, seized the handle of the basket with both hands, and cast a glance of trepidation at the old man.

"No, she 'll get there, all right,"—he returned, in the same indifferently-drawling tone.—"What is it to her? . . . She 'll get there as she is. . . . Run along."

Ánnushka walked off briskly into the forest. Kasyán gazed after her, then cast down his eyes, and smiled. In that prolonged smile, in the few words which he had uttered to Ánnushka, in the

very sound of his voice when he spoke to her, there was inexplicable, passionate love and tenderness. He cast another glance in the direction whither she had gone, smiled again, and, mopping his face, shook his head several times.

"Why didst thou send her off so soon?"—I asked him:—"I would have liked to buy her mushrooms. . . . ."

"But you can buy them at home, just as well, whenever you like,"—he answered me, for the first time addressing me as "you."

"Thou hast there a very pretty girl."

"No. . . . The idea! . . . . So-so . . ." he replied, reluctantly, as it were; and, from that moment, relapsed into his former taciturnity.

Perceiving that all my efforts to make him talk again were vain, I wended my way to the clearing. Moreover, the heat had decreased somewhat; but my ill-success continued, and I returned to the settlement with nothing but the one corncrake and a new axle. As we were driving into the yard, Kasyán suddenly turned to me.

"Master, eh, Master,"—said he:—"I am to blame toward thee; for 't was I that drove all the game away from thee."

"How so?"

"Well, that 's my secret. And thou hast a trained hound, and a good one, but thou couldst do nothing. When you come to think of it, what

are men,—men, hey? Man's a wild beast, but see what has been done with him!"

It would have been useless for me to try to convince Kasyán that it was impossible to "bewitch" the game, therefore I made him no reply. And besides, we immediately turned into the gate.

Ánnushka was not in the cottage; she had managed to get there already and leave her basket of mushrooms. Eroféi fitted the axle in place, after having subjected it preliminarily to severe and unjust criticism; and an hour later, I drove out, having left Kasyán a little money, which, at first, he did not wish to accept; but afterward, when he had reflected and held it in his palm, he thrust it into his bosom. He hardly uttered a single word during the course of that hour; he stood as before, leaning against the gate, made no reply to the reproaches of my coachman, and took an extremely cold leave of me.

As soon as I returned, I observed that my Eroféi was again in a gloomy frame of mind. . . . And, in fact, he had not found a morsel to eat in the village, and the watering facilities for his horses were bad. We drove off. With dissatisfaction expressed even in the nape of his neck, he sat on the box and was frightfully anxious to enter into conversation with me; but, in anticipation of my putting the first question, he confined himself to a low growling under his breath,

and hortatory, sometimes vicious speeches addressed to his horses.—"A village!"—he muttered: "A pretty sort of village, forsooth! I asked for just a little kvas—and there was no kvas. . . . . Akh, O Lord! And the water,—simply—phew!" (He spat aloud.) "No cucumbers, no kvas,—no nothing. . . . Come now, thou,"—he added in a loud tone, addressing the right trace-horse:—"I know thee, thou pampered beast! Thou 'rt fond of indulging thyself, I think. . . ." (And he lashed it with his whip.) "The horse has grown thoroughly crafty, but what a willing beast it used to be! . . . Come, come, look round this way!"[1] . . . . .

"Tell me, please, Eroféi,"—I began:—"what sort of a man is Kasyán?"

Eroféi did not answer me promptly; he was, in general, a deliberate, leisurely man; but I was instantly able to divine that my question had delighted and reassured him.

"The Flea, you mean?"—he said, at last, jerking at the reins:—"he 's a splendid man: a holy fool, right enough he is; you won't soon find another such fine man. Now, for example, he 's, point for point, exactly like our roan horse yonder: he 's incorrigible, has got out of hand,—that is to say, he has struck work. Well, and, after all,

[1] A well-trained trace-horse (which gallops), in a three-horse span (a tróïka), is supposed to hold its head lowered and twisted backward, so that the persons in the carriage can see its eyes and nostrils.—TRANSLATOR.

what sort of a workman is he, what a wretched body holds his soul,—well, and, all the same . . . . You see, he has been so from his childhood. At first, he used to go with his uncles in the carrying business: he had three of them; well, and then, later on, you know, he got tired of that—he threw it up. He began to live at home, and he would n't even sit still at home: such an uneasy man he was,—a regular flea. Luckily for him, he happened to have a kind master who did n't force him. So, from that time forth, he has been lounging about, like an unconfined sheep. And such a wonderful man he is, God knows: sometimes he 's as silent as a stump, then, all of a sudden, he 'll start to talk,—and what he 'll say, God knows. Is that any way to do? 'T is not. He 's an inconsistent man, so he is. But he sings well. So solemnly—'t is fine, fine."

"And does he really heal?"

"Heal, do you mean? . . . Come, how could he! As if he were that sort of a man! But he cured me of scrofula. . . How could he! He 's a stupid man, so he is,"—he added, after a brief pause.

"Hast thou known him long?"

"Yes. He and I were neighbours in Sytchóvko, on the Fair Metchá."

"And who is that young girl, Ánnushka, who met us in the forest,—is she a relative of his?"

Eroféi glanced at me over his shoulder, and grinned to the full extent of his mouth.

"Eh! . . . . Yes, she 's a relative. She 's an orphan: she has no mother, and no one knows who her mother was. Well, and she must be related to him: she 's awfully like him. . . . Well, and she lives with him. She 's a sharp-witted girl, there 's no denying it: she 's a good girl, and he, the old man, fairly adores her: she is a good girl. And 't is very likely, although you might not believe it, that he has taken it into his head to teach his Ánnushka to read and write. That 's just what you might expect of him: he 's such a peculiar man. So fickle, even ill-balanced, even . . . E-e-eh!" my coachman suddenly interrupted himself, and pulling up his horses, bent over to one side, and began to sniff the air.—"Don't I smell something burning? That I do! I would n't give a rap for these new axles. . . . But, apparently, I greased it all right. I must go and fetch some water: yonder is a pond handy, by the way."

And Eroféi slowly climbed down from his seat, untied the bucket, went to the pond, and, on his return, listened, not without satisfaction, to the hissing of the wheel-box, suddenly gripped by the water. . . . In the space of about ten versts, he was forced to deluge the axle six times, and night had fully closed in when we reached home.

X

THE AGENT

About fifteen versts from my estate, lives an acquaintance of mine, a young landed proprietor, a retired officer of the Guards, Arkády Pávlitch Pyénotchkin. He has a great deal of game on his estate, his house is built after a plan by a French architect, his servants are dressed in English style, he gives capital dinners, welcomes his guests cordially, and, nevertheless, one is reluctant to go to his house. He is a sagacious, positive man, has received a fine education, as is proper, has been in the service, has mingled with the highest society, and now occupies himself, very successfully, with the administration of his property. Arkády Pávlitch, to use his own words, is stern but just, is deeply concerned for the welfare of his subjects, and chastises them—for their own good. "One must treat them like children," he says, on such occasions: "their ignorance, *mon cher, il faut prendre cela en considération.*" But on the occasions of such so-called sad necessity, he avoids harsh and impetuous movements, and is not fond of raising his voice, but is rather given to poking his finger straight out before him, calmly remarking: "Thou knowest, I requested

thee, my dear fellow," or: "What ails thee, my friend? Come to thy senses;" merely compressing his lips a little the while, and twisting his mouth. He is short of stature, elegantly built, very good-looking, keeps his hands and finger-nails with the greatest neatness; his rosy lips and face fairly glow with health. His laugh is resonant and care-free, he screws up his bright brown eyes affably. He dresses extremely well, and with taste; he imports French books, pictures, and newspapers, but is not very fond of reading: he has barely conquered "The Wandering Jew." He plays cards in a masterly manner. Altogether, Arkády Pávlitch is regarded as one of the most cultured noblemen and most enviable matrimonial catches in our government; the ladies are wild over him, and praise his manners in particular. His demeanour is wonderfully good, he is as cautious as a cat, and has never been mixed up in any scandal since he was born, although, on occasion, he is fond of asserting himself and reducing a timid man to confusion. He positively loathes bad company—he is afraid of compromising himself; on the other hand in jovial moments, he announces himself to be a disciple of Epicurus, although, on the whole, he speaks ill of philosophy, calling it "the foggy food of German brains," and sometimes simply "nonsense." He is fond of music, also; at cards, he hums through his teeth, but with feel-

ing; he remembers something from "Lucia" and "Sonnambula," but always gets the pitch rather high. In winter, he goes to Petersburg. His house is in remarkable order; even his coachmen have succumbed to his influence, and every day they not only wipe off the horse-collars and brush their coats, but even wash their own faces. Arkády Pávlitch's house-serfs, 't is true, have a rather sidelong look,—but with us in Russia one cannot distinguish the surly man from the sleepy man. Arkády Pávlitch speaks in a soft and agreeable voice, with pauses, emitting every word with pleasure, as it were, through his handsome, perfumed moustache; he also employs a great many French expressions, such as: "*Mais, c'est impayable!*"—"*Mais, comment donc?*"—and so forth. Nevertheless, I, for one, am not overfond of visiting him, and if it were not for the black-cock and partridges, I should, in all probability, drop his acquaintance entirely. A certain strange uneasiness takes possession of you in his house; even the comfort does not gladden you, and every time that, at evening, the curled valet presents himself before you, in his sky-blue livery with buttons stamped with a coat of arms, and begins obsequiously to pull off your boots, you feel that if, instead of his pale and lean face the wonderfully broad cheek-bones and incredibly-blunt nose of a stalwart young peasant, only just taken from the plough by his mas-

ter, but who had already contrived to burst in half a score of places, the seams of the nankeen coat recently presented to him, were suddenly to appear before you,—you would be unspeakably delighted, and would willingly subject yourself to the danger of being stripped of your boot and your leg, together, up to the very hip-joint. . . . . In spite of my dislike for Arkády Pávlitch, I once happened to pass the night with him. On the following day, early in the morning, I ordered my calash to be harnessed up, but he would not let me go without breakfast in the English fashion, and conducted me to his study. Along with tea, they served us cutlets, soft-boiled eggs, butter, honey, cheese, and so forth. Two valets, in clean white gloves, swiftly and silently anticipated our slightest wishes. We sat on a Persian divan. Arkády Pávlitch wore full trousers of silk, a black velvet round jacket, a red fez with a blue tassel, and yellow Chinese slippers, without heels. He drank tea, laughed, inspected his finger-nails, smoked, tucked pillows under his ribs, and, altogether, felt in a capital frame of mind. After having breakfasted heartily, and with evident pleasure, Arkády Pávlitch poured himself out a glass of red wine, raised it to his lips, and suddenly contracted his brows in a frown.

"Why has n't the wine been warmed?"—he asked one of the valets in a rather sharp voice.

The valet grew confused, stood stock-still, and turned pale.

"Am not I asking thee a question, my dear fellow?"—went on Arkády Pávlitch, calmly, without taking his eyes off him.

The unhappy valet shifted from foot to foot where he stood, twisted his napkin, and uttered never a word. Arkády Pávlitch lowered his head, and gazed thoughtfully askance at him.

"*Pardon, mon cher,*"—he said, with a pleasant smile, giving my knee a friendly touch with his hand, and again rivetting his eyes on the valet.—"Well, go,"—he added, after a brief silence, elevated his eyebrows, and rang the bell.

There entered a thick-set, swarthy, black-haired man, with a low forehead, and eyes completely buried in fat.

"With regard to Feódor . . . . . take measures,"—said Arkády Pávlitch in an undertone, and with entire self-possession.

"I obey, sir,"—replied the thick-set man, and left the room.

"*Voilà, mon cher, les désagréments de la campagne,*"—remarked Arkády Pávlitch, merrily. "But where are you going? stay, sit with me a while longer."

"No,"—I answered:—"I must go."

"Always hunting! Okh, I have no patience with those sportsmen! But where are you going?"

"To Ryábovo, forty versts from here."

"To Ryábovo? Akh, good heavens, in that case I will go with you. Ryábovo is only five versts from my Shipilóvka, and I have n't been to Shipilóvka for ever so long: I have never managed to make the time. Now it has happened quite opportunely: do you hunt at Ryábovo today, and come to my house in the evening. *Ce sera charmant.* We will sup together,—we will take a cook with us,—you shall spend the night with me. Splendid! splendid!"—he added, without awaiting my reply. "*C'est arrangé.* . . . Hey, who is there? Order the calash to be brought round for us, and be quick about it. You have n't been to Shipilóvka? I should be ashamed to suggest your passing the night in my agent's cottage, were it not that I know you are not fastidious, and would have to pass the night in a hay-barn at Ryábovo. . . . Come on, come on!"

And Arkády Pávlitch began to sing some French romance or other.

"But perhaps you do not know,"—he went on, rocking himself to and fro on both legs:—"my peasants there are on quit-rent. I 'm such a liberal man,—but what are you going to do about it? They pay me their dues promptly, however; I would have put them on husbandry-service long ago, I confess, but there is too little land; and I 'm amazed, as it is, how they make both ends meet. However, *c'est leur affaire.* My

agent there is a fine fellow, *une forte tête,* a statesman! You will see. . . . How conveniently this has happened, really!"

There was no help for it. Instead of setting out at ten o'clock in the morning, we set out at two. Sportsmen will understand my impatience. Arkády Pávlitch was fond, as he expressed himself, of indulging himself on occasion, and took with him such an endless mass of linen, provisions, clothing, perfumes, pillows, and various dressing-cases, that an economical and self-contained German would have thought there was enough of these blessings to last him a whole year. Every time we descended a declivity, Arkády Pávlitch made a brief but powerful speech to the coachman, from which I was able to deduce the inference, that my friend was a good deal of a coward. However, the journey was accomplished with entire safety; only on one recently-repaired bridge the cart with the cook tumbled in, and the hind wheel crushed his stomach.

Arkády Pávlitch, at the sight of the downfall of his home-bred Karem, became seriously frightened, and immediately gave orders to inquire: "Were his arms whole?" On receiving an affirmative answer, he immediately regained his composure. Nevertheless, we were a good while on the way; I rode in the same calash with Arkády Pávlitch, and toward the end of the journey I felt bored to death, the more so as in the course of

several hours my acquaintance had turned utterly insipid, and had begun to proclaim liberal views. At last, we arrived, only not at Ryábovo but directly at Shipilóvka: somehow, that was the way it turned out. Even without that, I could not have hunted my fill on that day, and therefore, possessing my soul in patience, I submitted to my fate.

The cook had arrived a few minutes in advance of us, and, evidently, had already succeeded in making his arrangements, and notifying the proper persons, for at our very entrance into the boundaries we were met by the elder (the agent's son), a stalwart and red-haired peasant, a good seven feet in height, on horseback and without his cap, in a new peasant-coat wide-open on the chest. "And where is Sofrón?"—Arkády Pávlitch asked him. The elder first sprang alertly from his horse, made an obeisance to the girdle to his master, said: "Good-morning, dear little father, Arkády Pávlitch," then raised his head, shook himself, and announced that Sofrón had gone to Peróff, but that he had already been sent for. —"Well, follow us,"—said Arkády Pávlitch. The elder led his horse aside, out of decorum, sprang on its back, and set off at a trot behind the calash, holding his cap in his hand. We drove through the village. Several peasants in empty carts met us; they were driving from the threshing-floor and singing songs, jouncing about with

their whole bodies, and with their legs dangling in the air; but at the sight of our calash and of the elder, they suddenly fell silent, doffed their winter caps (it was summer-time), and half-rose, as though awaiting orders. Arkády Pávlitch graciously saluted them. An alarming agitation had, evidently, spread abroad throughout the village. Women in plaided, home-woven wool petticoats were flinging chips at unsagacious or too zealous dogs, a lame old man with a beard which started just under his eyes jerked his half-watered horse away from the well, smote it in the ribs, for some unknown reason, and then made his obeisance. Dirty little boys, in long shirts, ran howling to the cottages, flung themselves, belly down, on the thresholds, hung their heads, kicked their legs in the air, and in this manner rolled with great agility past the door, into the dark anteroom, whence they did not again emerge. Even the chickens scuttled headlong, in an accelerated trot, under the board at the bottom of the gate; one gallant cock, with a black breast, which resembled a black-satin waistcoat, and a handsome tail, which curled over to his very comb, had intended to remain in the road, and was on the very point of crowing, but suddenly was seized with confusion, and fled also. The agent's cottage stood apart from the rest, in the middle of a thick green hemp-patch. We drew up at the gate. Mr. Pyénotchkin rose, picturesquely

flung aside his cloak, and alighted from the calash, casting courteous glances around him. The agent's wife received us with low reverences, and approached to kiss the master's hand. Arkády Pávlitch allowed her to kiss it to her heart's content, and ascended to the porch. In the anteroom, in a dark corner, stood the elder's wife, and she also bowed low, but did not venture to kiss his hand. In the so-called cold cottage,[1] on the right of the anteroom, two other women were already bustling about: they had carried thence all sorts of rubbish, empty tubs, sheepskin coats which had grown stiff as wood, butter-pots, and a cradle with a pile of rags and a gay-coloured baby, and had swept up the dirt with a bath-besom.

Arkády Pávlitch banished them from the room, and placed himself on the wall-bench, under the holy pictures. The coachmen began to bring in trunks, coffers, and other conveniences, using their utmost endeavours to subdue the clumping of their heavy boots.

In the meantime, Arkády Pávlitch was questioning the elder about the harvest, the sowing, and other agricultural subjects. The elder replied satisfactorily, but, somehow, languidly and awkwardly, as though he were buttoning his kaftan with half-frozen fingers. He stood by the

[1] A "cold" cottage, or church, in Russia means one that is not furnished with the means of heating.—TRANSLATOR.

door, and kept watching and glancing round, every now and then, making way for the alert valet. I managed to catch a glimpse, past his broad shoulders, of the agent's wife silently thrashing some other woman in the anteroom. All at once, a peasant-cart rattled up and halted in front of the porch: the agent entered.

This "statesman," acording to Arkády Pávlitch's words, was short of stature, broad-shouldered, grey-haired, and thick-set, with a red nose, small blue eyes, and a beard in the shape of a fan. We may remark, by the way, that ever since Russia has stood, there has never been an instance in it of a man who has grown corpulent and waxed wealthy, without a wide-spreading beard; a man may have worn a thin, wedge-shaped beard all his life long,—and suddenly, lo and behold, it has encircled his face like a halo,—and where does the hair come from! The agent must have been carousing in Peróff: his face was considerably bloated, and he exhaled an odour of liquor.

"Akh, you, our fathers, our gracious ones,"—he began in a sing-song tone, and with so much emotion depicted on his face, that it seemed as though the tears were on the point of gushing forth;—"at last, you have done us the favour to come to us! . . . . Thy hand, dear little father, thy dear little hand,"—he added, protruding his lips in advance.

Arkády Pávlitch complied with his wish.—"Well, now then, brother Sofrón, how are thy affairs thriving?"—he asked, in a caressing voice.

"Akh, you, our fathers,"—exclaimed Sofrón: "but how could they go badly, those affairs! For you, our fathers, our benefactors, you have deigned to illuminate our wretched little village with your coming, you have rendered us happy until the day of our coffins. Glory to Thee, O Lord, Arkády Pávlitch, glory to Thee, O Lord! Everything is thriving, thanks to your mercy. . . ."

Here Sofrón stopped short, darted a glance at his master, and, as though again carried away by a transport of feeling (and the liquor was beginning to assert itself, to boot), he again besought the privilege of kissing his hand, and went on worse than before.

"Akh, you, our fathers, our benefactors . . . . . and . . . . . what am I saying! By God, I have gone perfectly mad with joy. . . . Heaven is my witness, I look, and cannot believe my eyes. . . . . Akh, you, our fathers! . . . ."

Arkády Pávlitch glanced at me, laughed, and said: *"N'est-ce pas que c'est touchant!"*

"Yes, dear little father, Arkády Pávlitch,"—went on the indefatigable agent:—"how could you do such a thing! you afflict me to the last de-

gree, dear little father: you did not deign to notify me of your coming. And where are you to spend the night? For the dirt, the rubbish here . . . . ."

"Never mind, Sofrón, never mind,"—replied Arkády Pávlitch, with a smile:—"it 's very nice here."

"Yes, but you, our fathers,—for whom is it nice? for the likes of us peasants 't is well enough; but you . . . . akh, you, my fathers, benefactors, akh, you, my fathers! . . . Forgive me, I 'm a fool, I 've lost my wits, by God, I 've gone utterly crazy."

In the meantime, supper was served;—Arkády Pávlitch began to eat. The old man drove his son away,—"Thou wilt make the air close," said he.

"Well, old man, and hast thou settled the boundaries?"—asked Mr. Pyénotchkin, who, evidently, was desirous of imitating the peasant style of speech, and winked at me.[1]

"We have, dear little father: all by thy bounty. We signed the affidavit day before yesterday. The Khlýnoff folks were inclined to resist, at first . . . and they really did kick up a row, father. They demanded . . . . they demanded . . . . God only knows what it was they demanded; but they are a foolish lot, dear little father, a stupid set of folks. But we, dear little father, by thy

[1] He said *stariná*, instead of *starík*, for "old man."—TRANSLATOR.

mercy, showed our gratitude [1] to Mikolái Mikoláitch, the middleman; we satisfied him; we acted entirely according to thy command, dear little father; as thou wert pleased to command, so we acted, and everything was done with the knowledge of Yegór Dmítritch."

"Yegór reported to me,"—remarked Arkády Pávlitch, pompously.

"Of course, dear little father, Yegór Dmítritch did so, of course."

"Well, and I suppose you are satisfied now?"

This was all that Sofrón was waiting for.—"Akh, you, our fathers, our benefactors!"—he began to whine again. . . . "Have mercy on me! . . . . for don't we pray to the Lord God, day and night, on behalf of you, our fathers. . . . There is n't much land, of course. . . . . ."

Pyénotchkin interrupted him.—"Well, all right, all right, Sofrón; I know thou servest me zealously. . . . Well, and how about the threshing?"

Sofrón heaved a sigh.

"Well, you, our fathers, the threshing is n't very good. And here now, dear little father, Arkády Pávlitch, allow me to announce to you what sort of a little business has come up." (Here he came close up to Mr. Pyénotchkin, throwing his hands apart, bent down, and screwed up one

[1] That is—bribed.—TRANSLATOR.

eye.) "We have found a dead body on our land."

"How did that come about?"

"Why, I myself can't comprehend it, dear little father, you, our fathers,—evidently, the devil made the mess, set the snare. And, luckily, it turned out to be near another man's boundary-line; only, what 's the use of concealing the sin? 'T was on our land. I immediately gave orders to have it dragged on to the other man's strip of land,[1] while it was possible, and I set a guard over it, and gave him command: 'Hold thy tongue!' says I. And I explained it to the commissary of police, by way of precaution. 'This was the way of it,' says I; and I treated him to tea, and gratitude. . . . Now, what do you think of it, dear little father? You see, it has been left on the necks of others; for one has to pay two hundred rubles for a dead body,—as surely as one has to pay for a penny roll."

Mr. Pyénotchkin laughed a great deal at his agent's clever ruse, and said to me several times, nodding his head in his direction: *"Quel gaillard, eh?"*

In the meantime, it had grown completely dark out of doors; Arkády Pávlitch ordered the table to be cleared, and hay to be brought. The valet

[1] Endless investigations by the police, and complications, ensue from the finding of a dead body. The person who owns the land is compelled to explain how it came there, and who murdered the victim.—TRANSLATOR.

spread out sheets for us, and laid out pillows; we lay down. Sofrón went to his own quarters, after receiving his orders for the following day. Arkády Pávlitch, while getting to sleep, talked a little more about the capital qualities of the Russian peasant, and then immediately observed to me that, since Sofrón had been in charge, the Shipilóvka serfs had never been a penny in arrears. . . . . The watchman tapped on his board;[1] the baby, who, evidently, had not yet succeeded in becoming thoroughly permeated with a sense of dutiful self-sacrifice, set up a yell somewhere in the cottage. . . We fell asleep.

We rose quite early on the following morning. I was on the point of setting off for Ryábovo, but Arkády Pávlitch wished to show me his estate, and begged me to remain. I was not averse to convincing myself, by actual observation, as to the capital qualities of the statesman Sofrón. The agent presented himself. He wore a blue long-coat, girt with a red belt. He talked much less than on the preceding evening, gazed vigilantly and intently in his master's eyes, replied fluently and in business-like fashion. We went with him to the threshing-floor. Sofrón's son, the seven-foot elder, by all the tokens a very stupid fellow, also followed us, and the village scribe, Fedosyéitch, a former soldier, with a

[1] To prove that he was alert; as with the modern watchman's clock-record. Sometimes the "boards" were sheets of iron. Some such can still be seen beaten into holes in monasteries.—TRANSLATOR.

huge moustache and an extremely strange expression of countenance, joined us: it seemed as though he must have beheld something remarkable very long ago, and had never recovered himself from the sight since. We inspected the threshing-floor, the barns, the grain-ricks, the sheds, the windmill, the cattle-yard, the garden-stuff, the hemp-plots; everything really was in capital order: the dejected faces of the serfs alone caused me some perplexity. In addition to the useful, Sofrón looked after the agreeable: he had planted willows along all the ditches; he had laid out paths and strewn them with sand between the ricks on the threshing-floor; he had constructed a weather-vane on the windmill, in the shape of a bear with gaping jaws, and a red tongue; he had fastened something in the nature of a Greek pediment to the brick cattle-shed, and had written in white-lead, under the pediment: "Bilt in the villige of Shipilofke in onetousan eigh Hundert farty. This catle shet."—Arkády Pávlitch melted completely, took to setting forth to me, in the French language, the advantages of the quit-rent system,—remarking, however, in that connection, that husbandry-service was more profitable for the peasants,—and any quantity of other things! He began to give the agent advice, how to plant potatoes, how to prepare the fodder for the cattle, and so forth. Sofrón listened to his master's remarks with attention, replying now

and then; but he no longer addressed Arkády Pávlitch either as " father," or as " benefactor," and kept insisting that they had very little land, that it would n't be amiss to buy some more. " Well then, buy some,"—said Arkády Pávlitch: —" I 'm not averse to having it bought in my name."—To these words, Sofrón made no reply, but merely stroked his beard.—" But it would n't be a bad idea to go to the forest now,"—remarked Mr. Pyénotchkin. Saddle-horses were immediately brought for us; we rode to the forest, or, as they say in our parts, " the forbidden ground." [1] In this " forbidden spot " we found an immense amount of thicket and game, for which Arkády Pávlitch praised Sofrón, and patted him on the shoulder. Mr. Pyénotchkin, in the matter of forestry, adhered to Russian ideas, and there, on the spot, he narrated to me what, according to his assertion, was a very amusing incident,—how a landed proprietor, given to jesting, had taught his forester a lesson, by plucking out about one-half of his beard, to demonstrate that the forest does not grow any thicker for being thinned out, ... However, in other respects, neither Sofrón nor Arkády Pávlitch avoided innovations. On our return to the village, the agent led us to in-

[1] The peasants have no right to wood from the forests, and no forest-land was allotted to them after the Emancipation. To prevent their stealing timber (as in " The Wolf," which follows), broad, deep ditches are often dug across the forest roads by the proprietors.—TRANSLATOR.

spect a winnowing-machine, which had recently been imported from Moscow. The winnowing-machine really did work well, but if Sofrón had known what an unpleasant experience was awaiting him and his master during this final stroll, he would, in all probability, have remained at home with us.

This is what happened. As we emerged from the shed, we beheld the following spectacle. A few paces from the door, beside a filthy puddle, in which three ducks were carelessly splashing, stood two serfs: one was an old man of sixty years, the other a young fellow of twenty, both in home-made, patched shirts, barefooted, and girt with ropes. The scribe, Fedosyéitch, was bustling zealously about them, and would, probably, have succeeded in prevailing upon them to withdraw, if we had tarried a little longer in the shed; but, on catching sight of us, he drew himself up in military fashion, fingers on his trousers-seams, and stood stock-still on the spot. The elder was standing there also, with mouth agape, and suspended in the act of striking fists. Arkády Pávlitch frowned, bit his lips, and stepped up to the peasants. Both bowed to his feet, in silence.

"What do you want? What are you petitioning about?"—he asked, in a stern voice, and somewhat through his nose. (The peasants glanced at each other and uttered never a word,

but merely screwed up their eyes, as though screening them from the sun, and began to breathe faster.)

"Come now, what is it?"—went on Arkády Pávlitch, and immediately turned to Sofrón:—"from what family are they?"

"From the Tobolyéeff family,"—replied the agent, slowly.

"Come now, what do you want?"—said Mr. Pyénotchkin again:—"Have n't you any tongues, pray? Tell me, thou, what dost thou want?"—he added, nodding his head at the old man.—"And don't be afraid, thou fool."

The old man stretched out his dark-brown, wrinkled neck, opened awry his lips, which had turned blue, ejaculated in a hoarse voice: "Intercede, sir!" and again banged his brow against the ground. The young serf also bowed low. Arkády Pávlitch gazed pompously at the napes of their necks, tossed back his head, and straddled his legs somewhat.—"What 's the matter? Against whom are you complaining?"

"Have mercy, sir! Give us a chance to breathe. . . . . We are tortured to death." (The old man spoke with difficulty.)

"Who has tortured thee?"

"Why, Sofrón Yakóvlevitch, dear little father."

Arkády Pávlitch said nothing for a while.

"What 's thy name?"

"Antíp, dear little father."

"And who is this?"

"My son, dear little father."

Arkády Pávlitch again remained silent for a while, and twitched his moustache.

"Well, and how does he torture thee?"—he began again, glancing at the old man through his moustache.

"Dear little father, he has utterly ruined us. He has given two of my sons as recruits out of their turn, dear little father, and now he is taking away the third one. Yesterday, dear little father, he took my last poor cow from my yard, and thrashed my wife—that's his lordship yonder." (He pointed at the elder.)

"H'm,"—ejaculated Arkády Pávlitch.

"Do not let him utterly ruin me, my benefactor!"

Mr. Pyénotchkin frowned.—"What's the meaning of this?"—he asked the agent in an undertone and with a look of displeasure.

"He's a drunkard, *sir,*"—replied the agent, for the first time employing the "sir":—"he won't work. He's always in arrears, these last five years, sir."

"Sofrón Yakóvlevitch has paid up my arrears for me, dear little father,"—went on the old man:—"this is the fifth year that he has paid, and how has he paid—he has made me his serf, dear little father, and so . . . . ."

"And how didst thou come to be in arrears?" asked Mr. Pyénotchkin, menacingly. (The old man hung his head.)—"Thou art fond of getting drunk, I think,—of roaming around among the dram-shops?" (The old man tried to open his mouth.)

"I know you,"—went on Arkády Pávlitch, with vehemence:—"your business is drinking and lying on the oven; and a good peasant must be responsible for you."

"And he 's an insolent beast, too," the agent interjected into the gentleman's speech.

"Well, that one understands as a matter of course. That is always the case: I have observed it more than once. He leads a dissolute life for a whole year, is insolent, and now flings himself at my feet."

"Dear little father, Arkády Pávlitch,"—said the old man in despair:—"have mercy, defend us,—I 'm not insolent! I speak as I would before the Lord God, 't is more than I can bear. Sofrón Yakóvlevitch has taken a dislike to me,—as for the reason why he has taken the dislike, the Lord be his judge! He is ruining me utterly, dear little father. . . . This is my last son, here . . . . and you see . . . . ." (A tear glittered in the old man's yellow, wrinkled eyes.)—"Have mercy, sir, defend us." . . . . . .

"Yes, and not us alone—" began the young serf. . . . . .

All at once, Arkády Pávlitch flared up:

"And who asked thee, hey? when thou art not asked, hold thy tongue. . . . What 's the meaning of this? Hold thy tongue, I tell thee! Hold thy tongue! . . . . . Akh, my God! why, this is simply mutiny! No, brother, I would n't advise any one to mutiny on my estate. . . I have . . . . ." (Arkády Pávlitch began to stride back and forth, then, probably, recalled to himself my presence, turned away, and put his hands in his pockets.) . . . . . "*Je vous vous demande bien pardon, mon cher,*"—he said, with a constrained smile, significantly lowering his voice.—"*C'est le mauvais côté de la médaille.* . . . Come, very good, very good,"—he went on, without looking at the peasant men:—"I will give orders . . . good, go your way."—(The peasants did not rise.)—"Well, have n't I told you? . . . it 's all right. Go away,—I 'll give orders, I tell you."

Arkády Pávlitch turned his back on them.—"Eternal dissatisfaction,"—he said between his teeth, and walked off homeward with huge strides. Sofrón followed him. The scribe's eyes bulged out, as though he were on the point of making a long leap in some direction. The elder scared the ducks out of the puddle. The petitioners stood a while longer on the same spot, stared at each other, and trudged away whence they came.

A couple of hours later, I was in Ryábovo, and, in company with Anpadíst, a peasant of my acquaintance, was preparing to set off hunt-

ing. Pyénotchkin had sulked at Sofrón up to the very moment of my departure. I began to talk with Anpadíst about the Shipilóvka serfs, about Mr. Pyénotchkin; I asked him, whether he knew the agent there.

"Sofrón Yakóvlevitch, you mean? . . . . Oh, don't I just!"

"And what sort of a man is he?"

"He 's a dog, and not a man: you won't find such another dog this side of Kursk."

"But what dost thou mean?"

"Why, Shipilóvka merely stands in the name of . . . . how do you call him? Pyénkin; he does n't own it, you see: Sofrón owns it."

"You don't say so?"

"He runs it as his own property. The peasants are up to their ears in debt to him: they drudge for him like hired men: he sends one off with the carrier's train, another somewhere else . . . . . he harries them altogether."

"They have not much land, it seems?"

"Not much? He hires eighty desyatínas from the Khlínovo folks alone, and from us, one hundred and twenty; there 's a whole hundred and fifty desyatínas there besides for you. And land is not the only thing he trades in: he trades in horses, and cattle, and tar, and butter, and flax, and a lot of things besides. . . . He 's clever, awfully clever, and rich too, the beast! But this is the bad part of it—he assaults folks.

He 's a wild beast, not a man;—I 've said it: he 's a dog, a dirty dog, that 's what he is—a dirty dog."

" But why don't the people complain of him? "

" Eksta! What does the master care! What is it to him, so long as the money is not in arrears? Yes, just try it,"—he added, after a brief pause: —" complain. No, he 'll let thee . . . well, just try it . . . No, he 'll give you to understand . . ." I mentioned Antíp, and related what I had seen.

" Well,"—said Anpadíst:—" now he 'll devour him alive; he 'll devour that man utterly. Now the elder will beat him. The poor, unhappy fellow, just think of it! And why is he suffering? . . . He picked a quarrel with him at the village-council,—with that agent,—things had got beyond endurance, you see. . . A great matter, forsooth! So then he began to peck at him,—at Antíp, I mean. Now he 'll make an end of him. For he 's such a dirty dog, a hound,—the Lord forgive my sin!—he knows whom to oppress. The old men,—he does n't touch those that are richer,—and with large families, the bald-headed devil,—but now he 'll let himself loose! You see, he gave Antíp's sons for recruits out of their turn,—the cruel rascal, the dirty dog,—may the Lord forgive my great sin! "

We set off on our hunt.

Salzburg in Silesia, July, 1847.

XI

THE COUNTING-HOUSE

It happened in the autumn. I had been roving about for several hours over the fields, with my gun; and, in all probability, would not have returned before the evening to the posting-station on the Kursk highway, where my tróïka was waiting for me, had not the extremely fine and cold, drizzling rain, which had been sticking to me ever since the morning, indefatigably and pitilessly, like an old maid, made me, at last, seek a temporary shelter, at least, somewhere in the vicinity. While I was deliberating in which direction to go, a low-roofed hut suddenly presented itself to my eyes, beside a field sown with peas. I went to the hut, cast a glance under the straw penthouse, and beheld an old man so decrepit, that he immediately reminded me of that dying goat which Robinson Crusoe found in one of the caves of his island. The old man was squatting on his heels, puckering up his purblind, tiny eyes, and hurriedly but cautiously, like a hare (the poor fellow had not a single tooth), chewing a hard, dry pea, incessantly rolling it from side to side. He was so engrossed in his occupation, that he did not notice my approach.

"Grandpa! Hey there, grandpa!"—I said.

He ceased chewing, elevated his eyebrows and, with an effort, opened his eyes.

"What?"—he mumbled in a hoarse voice.

"Where is there a village near at hand?"—I asked.

The old man set to chewing again. He had not heard me. I repeated my question more loudly than before.

"A village? . . . . but what dost thou want?"

"Why, to shelter myself from this rain."

"What?"

"To shelter myself from the rain."

"Yes!" (He scratched his sunburned neck.) "Well, thou must go, seest thou,"—he began suddenly, flourishing his hands loosely:—"yo . . . yonder, right past the little wood, thou must go, —yonder, as thou goest—there 'll be a road; do thou let it—the road, that is—alone, and keep on always to the right, keep right on, keep right on, keep right on. . . . . Well, and then thou wilt come to Anányevo. Or thou canst go through to Sítovko."

It was with difficulty that I understood the old man. His moustache interfered with him, and his tongue obeyed him badly.

"But whence comest thou?"—I asked him.

"What?"

"Whence art thou?"

"From Anányevo."

"What art thou doing here?"

"What?"

"What art thou doing here?"

"I 'm the watchman."

"But what art thou guarding?"

"Why, the peas."

I could not help bursting into a laugh.

"Why, good gracious,—how old art thou?"

"God knows."

"Thy sight is bad, is n't it?"

"Yes. There are times when I hear nothing."

"Then, how canst thou act as watchman, pray?"

"My elders know."

"Thy elders," I thought, and surveyed the poor old man, not without compassion. He fumbled about his person, got a crust of stale bread from his bosom, and began to suck at it, like a child, drawing in with an effort his cheeks, which were sunken enough without that.

I walked off in the direction of the wood, turned to the right, kept on and on, as the old man had advised me, and at last reached a large village with a stone church in the new style, that is to say, with columns, and a spacious manor-house, also with columns. Already from afar, athwart the close network of the rain, I had observed a cottage with a board roof, and two chimneys taller than the others,—in all probability,

the dwelling of the elder,—and thither I directed my steps, in the hope of finding in his house a samovár, tea, sugar, and cream which was not completely sour. Accompanied by my thoroughly benumbed dog, I ascended the porch, entered the anteroom, and opened the door; but, instead of the customary appliances of a cottage, I beheld several tables loaded down with papers, two red cupboards spattered with ink, a leaden sand-box weighing about a pud, very long pens, and so forth. At one of the tables sat a young fellow of twenty years, with a puffy and sickly face, tiny little eyes, a greasy forehead, and interminable curls on his temples. He was dressed, as was proper, in a grey nankeen kaftan shiny on the collar and the stomach.

"What do you want?"—he asked me, throwing his head upward, like a horse which has not been expecting to be seized by the muzzle.

"Does the manager live here . . . . . or . . . . ."

"This is the squire's principal counting-house,"—he interrupted me.—"I 'm the clerk on duty. . . . Do you mean to say you did n't see the sign? That 's what the sign is nailed up for."

"And where can I dry myself? Has any one in the village a samovár?"

"Why should n't there be a samovár?"—retorted the young fellow in the grey kaftan, pompously: "Go to Father Timoféi, or to the cot-

tage of the house-serfs, or to Nazár Tarásitch, or to Agraféna the poultry-woman."

"Who 's that thou art talking to, thou dolt? thou wilt not let one sleep, dolt!"—rang out a voice from the adjoining room.

"Why, here 's some gentleman or other has come in, and is asking where he can dry himself."

"What gentleman is it?"

"I don't know. He has a dog and a gun."

A bed creaked in the adjoining room. The door opened, and there entered a man about fifty years of age, low of stature, squat, with a bull-neck, protruding eyes, remarkably round cheeks, and a polish all over his face.

"What do you want?"—he asked me.

"To dry myself."

"This is not the place for that."

"I did not know that this was a counting-house; moreover, I am ready to pay . . . . ."

"You might do it here,"—returned the fat man:—"please to come this way." (He conducted me into another room, only not the one from which he had emerged.)—"Shall you be comfortable here?"

"Yes. . . . But cannot I get some tea with cream?"

"Certainly, directly. In the meantime, please to undress yourself and rest, and the tea shall be ready immediately."

"Whose estate is this?"

"The estate of Mme. Losnyakóff, Eléna Nikoláevna."

He left the room. I looked about me: along the partition which separated my room from the counting-house stood a huge, leather-covered divan; two chairs, also upholstered in leather, with extremely high backs, reared themselves in the air, one on each side of the single window, which opened on the street. On the walls, hung with dark-green paper with pink patterns, were three enormous pictures, painted in oils. One depicted a setter hound with a blue collar and the inscription: "This is my delight;" at the dog's feet flowed a river, and on the opposite shore of the river, beneath a pine-tree, sat a hare of extravagant size, with ears pricked up. In the other picture, two old men were eating watermelon: beyond the watermelon, in the distance, a Greek portico was visible bearing the inscription: "The Temple of Contentment." The third picture presented a half-naked woman in a reclining attitude, *en raccourci,* with red knees and very thick heels. My dog, without the slightest delay, with superhuman effort, crawled under the divan, and apparently found a great deal of dust there, for he began to sneeze frightfully. I walked to the window. Across the street, from the manor-house to the counting-house of the estate, in a diagonal line, lay boards: a very useful precaution, because everywhere

around, thanks to our black soil, and to the prolonged rain, the mud was frightful. Round about the squire's residence, which stood with its back to the street, that was going on which usually does go on around the manors of the gentry: maids in faded cotton frocks were whisking to and fro; house-serfs were strolling through the mud, halting and meditatively scratching their spines, the rural policeman's horse, which was tied, was idly swishing its tail, and, with its muzzle tossed aloft, was nibbling the fence; hens were cackling; consumptive turkeys were incessantly calling to one another. On the porch of a dark and rotting building, probably the bath-house, sat a sturdy young fellow with a guitar, singing, not without spirit, the familiar ballad:

"E—I 'll to the desert hie myself away
From these most lovely scenes"—

and so forth.[1]

The fat man entered my room.

"Here, they 're bringing your tea,"—he said to me, with a pleasant smile.

The young fellow in the grey kaftan, the clerk on duty, set out on an old l'ombre table the samovár, the tea-pot, a glass with a cracked saucer, a pot of cream, and a bundle of Bolkhóff ring-rolls as hard as stone. The fat man withdrew.

[1] The man's atrocious pronunciation cannot be reproduced in English.—TRANSLATOR.

"Who is that,"—I asked the clerk on duty:—"the manager?"

"Oh, no, sir; he used to be the head cashier, but now he has been promoted to be the head office-clerk."

"But have you no manager here?"

"No, sir, none. There 's a peasant overseer, Mikhaílo Vikúloff, but there 's no manager."

"So there 's an agent?"

"Certainly, there is: a German, Lindamandol, Kárlo Kárlitch;—only he does n't manage affairs."

"But who does the managing?"

"The mistress herself."

"You don't say so!—And have you a large force in the office?"

The young fellow reflected.

"Six men."

"Who are they?"—I asked.

"Why, these:—first, there 's Vasíly Nikoláevitch, the head cashier; and next, Piótr the clerk; Piótr's brother Iván, a clerk; another clerk, Iván; Koskenkín[1] Narkízoff, also a clerk; and myself;—and you could n't reckon up all."

"Your mistress has a great many menials, I suppose?"

"No, not so very many. . . ."

"But how many?"

[1] Konstantín.—TRANSLATOR.

"They sum up to about a hundred and fifty persons, probably."

We both remained silent for a while.

"Well, and dost thou write well?"—I began again.

The young fellow grinned to the full capacity of his mouth, nodded his head, went into the office, and brought back a written sheet of paper.

"This is my writing,"—said he, without ceasing to grin.

I looked at it: on a quarter-sheet of greyish paper, the following was written in a large, handsome script:

"ORDINANCE"

"From the head home office of the Anányevo estate, to the Overseer Mikhaílo Vikúloff, No. 209."

"Thou art ordered, immediately on receipt of this, to institute an inquiry: who it was that, during the past night, in a state of intoxication and with improper songs, walked through the English park, and waked up and disturbed the French governess, Mme. Engenie? and what the watchman was about, and who was on guard in the park and permitted such disorder? Thou art ordered to report without delay to the office concerning the aforesaid, in full detail.

"Head clerk, Nikolái Khvostóff."

A huge seal, bearing a coat of arms, was attached to the ordinance, with the inscription: "Seal of the head office of the Anányevo estate;" and below was the signature: "To be executed punctually: ELÉNA LOSNYAKÓFF."

"Did the mistress herself sign that, pray?"—I asked.

"Certainly, sir, she herself: she always signs herself. Otherwise, the order cannot take effect."

"Well, and shall you send this ordinance to the overseer?"

"No, sir. He will come himself and read it. That is to say, it will be read to him; for he can't read and write." (The clerk on duty lapsed into silence again.)

"Well, sir,"—he added, smilingly:—"it 's well written, is n't it, sir?"

"Yes."

"Of course, I did n't compose it. Koskenkín is a master-hand at that."

"What? . . . . . Dost thou mean to say that with you the orders are first composed?"

"How else, sir? They cannot be written out fairly straight off."

"And how much of a salary dost thou receive?"—I asked.

"Thirty-five rubles a year, and five rubles for boots."

"And art thou satisfied?"

"Certainly I am.—Not every one can get into

our counting-house. God himself ordered me there, to tell the truth: my uncle serves as butler."

"And art thou well off?"

"Yes, sir. To tell the truth,"—he went on, with a sigh:—"the likes of us are better off with the merchants. Fellows like me are very well off with the merchants. Now, for instance, yesterday there came to us a merchant from Venyóvo,—so his workman told me. . . . They 're well off, there 's no denying it,—well off."

"But do the merchants give bigger wages?"

"God forbid! Why, a merchant would pitch you out of doors by the scruff of the neck if you were to ask wages from him. No, you must live in faith and in fear with a merchant. He gives you food, and drink, and clothing, and everything. If you please him,—he 'll give you even more. . . . What do you want with wages! you don't need any at all. . . . And the merchant lives simply in Russian fashion, in our own fashion: if you go on the road with him, he drinks tea, and you drink tea; what he eats, that you eat also. A merchant . . . . why, there 's no comparison: a merchant is not the same as a well-born master. A merchant is n't capricious; now, if he gets angry, he 'll thrash you, and that 's the end of it. He does n't nag and jeer. . . . But with the well-born master,—woe be to you! Nothing suits him: this is not right, and he is n't satisfied

with the other. If you give him a glass of water or food,—'Akh, the water stinks! akh, the food stinks!' You carry it away, and stand outside the door a bit, and carry it in again:—'Well, now, that 's good; well, now, that does n't stink.' And the lady mistresses, I can just tell you, the lady mistresses! . . . or, take the young ladies! . . . . ."

The clerk on duty briskly left the room. I finished my glass of tea, lay down on the divan, and fell asleep. I slept two hours.

On waking, I tried to rise, but indolence overpowered me; I closed my eyes, but did not get to sleep again. A low-voiced conversation was in progress in the office, on the other side of the partition. I involuntarily began to listen.

"Yis, sir, yis, sir, Nikolái Eremyéitch,"—said one voice:—"yis, sir. That cannot be taken into account, sir; it really can't. . . . H'm!" (The speaker coughed.)

"Pray believe me, Gavríla Antónitch,"—returned the fat man's voice:—"judge for yourself, whether I don't know the course of affairs here."

"Who else should know it, Nikolái Eremyéitch: you are the first person here, sir, one may say. Well, and how is it to be, sir;"—pursued the voice which was unfamiliar to me:—"what shall we decide on, Nikolái Eremyéitch?—permit me to inquire."

"What shall we decide on, Gavríla Antónitch? The matter depends on you, so to speak: you don't care about it, apparently."

"Good gracious, Nikolái Eremyéitch: what are you saying? I 'm a merchant, a merchant; my business is to buy. That 's what we merchants stand on, Nikolái Eremyéitch,—I may say."

"Eight rubles,"—said the fat man, pausing between his words.

A sigh was audible.

"Nikolái Eremyéitch, you are pleased to demand an awful lot."

"I can't do otherwise, Gavríla Antónitch,—'t is impossible,—I speak as in the presence of the Lord God."

A silence ensued.

I raised myself softly on my elbow, and peered through a crack in the partition. The fat man was sitting with his back toward me. Facing him, sat a merchant, about forty years old, gaunt and pale, as though smeared with fasting butter.[1] He kept incessantly running his fingers through his beard, blinking his eyes very rapidly, and twitching his lips.

"The crops are wonderfully fine this year, sir,"—he began again:—"all the time I have

[1] That is, with oil, butter being forbidden during the Great Fast (Lent), because it is an animal product. The wealthy replace it with costly nut-oils; the poor, with sunflower-seed and other strong, coarse oils.—TRANSLATOR.

been driving I have been admiring them. Beginning with Vorónezh, they are splendid, first-class, sir, I may say."

"The crops really are n't bad,"—replied the head of the counting-house: "but, surely, you know, Gavríla Antónitch, that the autumn gives good promise, but 't will be as the spring wills."

"That 's a fact, Nikolái Eremyéitch: everything is according to God's will; you have deigned to speak the exact truth. . . . . But I think your visitor has waked up, sir."

The fat man turned round . . . . and listened.

"No, he 's asleep. However, possibly you know . . . . ."

He stepped to the door.

"No, he 's asleep,"—he repeated, and returned to his place.

"Well, and how is it to be, Nikolái Eremyéitch?"—began the merchant again:—"we really must close the bargain. . . . Let it go at that then, Nikolái Eremyéitch, let it go at that,"—he went on, winking uninterruptedly: "two grey bank-notes and one white note for your grace, and yonder—" (he nodded his head in the direction of the manor-house) "—six rubles and a half. Shall we strike hands on it?"

"Four grey notes,"[1]—replied the clerk.

[1] The (old-time) grey bank-note was for two rubles; the white, one ruble.—TRANSLATOR.

"Come, three."

"Four grey without the white."

"Three, Nikolái Eremyéitch."

"Three and a half, not a kopék less."

"Three, Nikolái Eremyéitch."

"Don't even mention such a thing, Gavríla Antónitch."

"What a pig-headed fellow!"—muttered the merchant.—"I think I 'd better settle the matter myself with the lady."'

"As you like,"—replied the fat man:—"you ought to have done it long ago. Really, what 's the use of bothering yourself? . . 'T is much better so!"

"Come, enough! Stop that, Nikolái Eremyéitch. Why, he flies into a rage on the instant! I was only saying that, you know, to hear myself talk."

"No, really now . . . ."

"Have done, I tell you. . . . I was joking, I tell you. Come, take three and a half,—what can one do with you?"

"I ought to take four, but, like a fool, I have been too hasty,"—muttered the fat man.

"So, yonder, at the house, six and a half, sir, Nikolái Eremyéitch,—the grain is sold for six and a half?"

"Six and a half, yes, you 've already been told."

"Well, then, strike hands on the bargain, Nikolái Eremyéitch—" (the merchant smote the

clerk's palm with his outspread fingers) "—and God bless us!" (The merchant rose.)—"So now I 'll be off to the lady mistress, dear little father, Nikolái Eremyéitch, and order them to announce me, and I 'll say: 'Nikolái Eremyéitch has settled on six and a half, ma'am.'"

"Say just that, Gavríla Antónitch."

"And now, please to accept."

The merchant handed over to the clerk a small bundle of paper-money, made his bow, shook his head, took up his hat with two fingers, twitched his shoulders, imparted to his figure an undulating motion, and left the room, his boots squeaking decorously. Nikolái Eremyéitch walked to the wall, and, so far as I could observe, began to sort over the money which the merchant had given him. A red head with thick side-whiskers thrust itself in at the door.

"Well, how are things?"—inquired the head:—"Is everything as it should be?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

The fat man waved his hand with vexation, and pointed toward my room.

"Ah, very good!" returned the head, and vanished.

The fat man went to the table, sat down, opened a book, got out his abacus,[1] and began to

[1] The merchants still use the counting-frame, rattling the colored balls on the wires to and fro with marvellous rapidity, and thus performing the most intricate calculations, instead of using paper and pencil.—TRANSLATOR.

deduct and add the bone balls, using for the purpose not his forefinger, but the third finger of his right hand, which is more decorous.

The clerk on duty entered.

"What dost thou want?"

"Sidór has arrived from Goloplyók."

"Ah! well, call him in. Stay, stay. . . . . Go first, and see whether that strange gentleman in there is still asleep, or whether he has waked up."

The clerk on duty cautiously entered my room. I laid my head on my game-bag, which served me in lieu of a pillow, and shut my eyes.

"He 's asleep,"—whispered the office-boy, returning to the office.

The fat man emitted a growl between his teeth.

"Well, summon Sidór,"—he said at last.

Again I raised myself on my elbow. There entered a peasant of huge stature, about thirty years of age, healthy, rosy-cheeked, with light, chestnut hair, and a small, curly beard. He prayed before the holy pictures, bowed to the head clerk, took his cap in both hands, and straightened himself up.

"Good-day, Sidór,"—said the fat man, rattling his counting-frame.

"Good . . day, Nikolái Eremyéitch."

"Well, and how 's the road?"

"Good, Nikolái Eremyéitch. A trifle mud-

dy." (The peasant spoke neither fast nor loudly.)

"Is thy wife well?"

"What should ail her! She 's all right."

The peasant heaved a sigh, and thrust out his leg. Nikolái Eremyéitch stuck his pen behind his ear, and blew his nose.

"Well, and why hast thou come?"—he went on with his questions, stuffing his checked handkerchief into his pocket.

"Why, we 've heard, Nikolái Eremyéitch, that carpenters are required from us."

"Well, what of that—are n't there any among you, I 'd like to know?"

"Of course there are, Nikolái Eremyéitch: ours is a forest hamlet,—you know well. But 't is our working season, Nikolái Eremyéitch."

"Your working season! That 's precisely the point: you 're fond enough of working for other folks, but you don't like to work for your own mistress. . . . It amounts to the same thing!"

"The work is the same, in fact, Nikolái Eremyéitch . . . . but . . . ."

"Well?"

"The pay is . . . you know . . . . awfully . . ."

"As if it was n't enough for you! Just see, how spoiled you are! Get out with you!"

"Yes, and I want to say, Nikolái Eremyéitch, there 's only work enough for a week, but we shall be detained a month. First the material

gives out, and then we 'll be sent into the garden to clean the paths.'"

"A pretty reason! The mistress herself has deigned to command, and 't is not for me and thee to make any argument."

Sidór said nothing for a while, and began to shift from foot to foot.

Nikolái Eremyéitch twisted his head on one side, and rattled the reckoning-beads vigorously.

"Our . . . . peasants . . . . Nikolái Eremyéitch . . . . ." began Sidór at last, stammering over every word:—"have ordered me to give your grace . . . and here—there are . . . ." (He thrust his huge hand into the breast of his long coat, and began to draw thence a folded towel with red patterns.)

"What dost thou mean, what dost thou mean, fool? hast thou gone crazy, pray?"—the fat man hastily interrupted him.—"Go, go to me in my cottage,"—he continued, almost pushing out the astounded peasant;—"ask there for my wife . . . . she 'll give thee some tea; I 'll be there directly. Go thy way! Pray, hast not thou been told to go?"

Sidór left the room.

"What a . . . . . bear!"—muttered the head clerk after him, shook his head, and began again on his reckoning-frame.

Suddenly shouts of: "Kupryá! Kupryá! you can't upset Kupryá!"—resounded on the street

and on the porch, and a little later there entered the office a man of low stature, consumptive in appearance, with a remarkably long nose, large, impassive eyes, and a very haughty mien. He was clad in a tattered old great-coat, Adelaïda colour,—or, as it is called among us, ' oddeloida,' —with a velveteen collar and tiny buttons. He carried a fagot of firewood on his shoulders. Five house-serfs crowded around him, and all were shouting, " Kupryá! you can't upset Kupryá! Kupryá has been appointed to be stove-tender!" But the man in the great-coat with the velveteen collar paid not the slightest attention to the turbulence of his companions, and never changed countenance. With measured steps he walked to the stove, flung down his burden, rose, pulled a snuff-box from his rear pocket, opened his eyes wide, and began to stuff his nose with powdered melilot mixed with ashes.

When the noisy horde entered, the fat man was on the point of frowning, and half-rose from his seat; but on seeing what the matter was, he smiled, and merely ordered them not to shout: " There 's a sportsman asleep in the next room," —said he.

" What sportsman? "—asked a couple of the men, with one accord.

" A landed proprietor."

" Ah! "

" Let them go on with their row,"—said the

man with the velveteen collar, flinging wide his arms:—" what do I care! if only they don't touch me. I have been appointed to be the stove-tender!"

" The stove-tender! the stove-tender!"—joyously chimed in the crowd.

" The mistress ordered it,"—he went on, shrugging his shoulders:—" but just you wait . . . . you 'll be appointed swineherds yet. But that I have been a tailor, and a good tailor, and learned my business in the best workshops in Moscow, and sewed for ' Enerals,' is something that nobody can take away from me. But what are you putting on big airs about? . . . what? you are sluggards, drones, nothing more. If they were to set me free, I should n't die of hunger, I should n't go to destruction; give me a passport,—and I 'll pay in a good quit-rent, and satisfy the masters. But how about you? You 'd perish, perish like flies, and that 's all about it!"

" Thou hast lied,"—interrupted a pockmarked young fellow with white eyebrows and lashes, a red neckerchief, and ragged elbows:—" thou hast had a passport, and the masters never saw a kopék of quit-rent from thee, and thou hast never earned a penny for thyself: thou hadst all thou could do to drag thy legs home, and ever since that time thou hast lived in one wretched kaftan."

" And what is one to do, Konstantín Narkí-

zitch!"—retorted Kupriyán:—"if a man has fallen in love, and perished and gone to ruin? Do thou first go through my experience, Konstantín Narkízitch, and then thou mayest condemn me."

"And a pretty person thou didst choose to fall in love with! a regular monster!"

"No, don't say that, Konstantín Narkízitch."

"But to whom art thou making that assertion? Why, I 've seen her myself; last year, in Moscow, I saw her with my own eyes."

"Last year she really had gone off a bit in her looks,"—remarked Kupriyán.

"No, gentlemen, see here,"—interposed, in a scornful and negligent voice, a tall man, with a face sprinkled with pimples, and all curled and oiled,—probably the valet:—"here now, suppose we let Kupriyán Afanásitch sing his little song. Come on, begin, Kupriyán Afanásitch!"

"Yes, yes!"—chorused the others.—"Hey, there, Alexandra! thou hast caught Kupryá! there 's no denying it. . . . Sing away, Kupryá! —Gallant lad, Alexandra!" (House-serfs, by way of showing greater tenderness, frequently use the feminine terminations in speaking of a man.)—"Pipe up!"

"This is not the place to sing,"—retorted Kupryá, firmly:—"this is the gentry's counting-house."

"But what business is that of thine? I do be-

lieve thou art aiming at becoming head of the office thyself!"—replied Konstantín, with a coarse laugh.—"It must be so!"

"Everything is in the power of the mistress,"—remarked the poor fellow.

"See, see what he's aiming at! See there, what sort of a fellow he is! Phew! phew! ah!"

And all burst into violent laughter, and some even jumped. The one who laughed loudest of all was a wretched lad of fifteen, probably the son of an aristocrat among the house-serfs; he wore a waistcoat with bronze buttons, a neck-cloth of a lilac hue, and had already succeeded in acquiring a portly belly.

"Hearken now, Kupryá, confess,"—began Nikolái Eremyéitch, in a self-satisfied way, visibly in a sweat and affected:—"'t is a bad thing to be the stove-tender? Is n't it now? a trifling business, altogether, I fancy?"

"And what of that, Nikolái Eremyéitch,"—remarked Kupriyán:—"here you are now our head clerk, 't is true; there 's no disputing that, it 's a fact; but you were under the ban once, and lived in a peasant's hut yourself too."

"Just look out for thyself, don't forget thyself before me,"—the fat man interrupted snappishly:—"they 're jesting with thee, fool; thou should feel it, and be grateful, fool, that they bother themselves about thee, fool."

"It just slipped off my tongue, Nikolái Eremyéitch, pardon me. . . ."

"Just so, 't was a slip of the tongue."

The door flew wide open, and a page ran in.

"Nikolái Eremyéitch, the mistress summons you to her presence."

"Who is with the mistress?"—he asked the page.

"Aksínya Nikítishna and a merchant from Venyóvo."

"I 'll be there in a minute. And as for you, brothers,"—he went on, in a persuasive voice:—"you 'd better take yourself away from here, with the newly appointed stove-tender: nobody knows when the German may drop in, and he 'll complain on the spot."

The fat man smoothed his hair, coughed into his hand almost entirely covered by his coat-sleeve, hooked up his coat, and wended his way to the mistress, straddling his legs far apart as he walked. After waiting a while, the whole horde followed him, including Kupryá. My old acquaintance, the clerk on duty, was left alone. He started to clean a pen, but fell asleep where he sat. Several flies immediately took advantage of the fortunate opportunity, and stuck themselves around his mouth. A mosquito alighted on his forehead, planted its little legs in regular order, and slowly plunged its whole sting into his soft body. The former red-head

with side-whiskers made its appearance again from behind the door, stared and stared, and entered the office with its decidedly ugly body.

"Fediúshka! Hey, Fediúshka! thou art eternally asleep!"—said the head cashier.

The clerk on duty opened his eyes, and rose from his chair.

"Has Nikolái Eremyéitch gone to the mistress?"

"He has, Vasíly Nikoláitch."

"Ah! ah!"—thought I:—"'t is he, the head cashier!"

The head cashier began to walk about the room. However, he stole about, rather than walked, and, altogether, bore a strong resemblance to a cat. From his shoulders depended an old, black dress-coat, with very narrow tails; he kept one hand on his breast, and with the other kept constantly clutching at his tall, tight stock of horsehair, and twisting his head in a strained way. He wore goatskin boots, and trod very softly.

"Squire Yagúshkin was asking for you today,"—added the clerk on duty.

"H'm,—was he? What did he say?"

"He said that he was going to Tiutiúrevo this evening, and would expect you. 'I must have a talk with Vasíly Nikoláitch about a certain matter,' says he,—but what the business was, he did n't mention: 'Vasíly Nikoláitch will know,' says he.

"H'm!"—returned the head cashier, and went to the window.

"Is Nikolái Eremyéitch in the office?"—rang out a loud voice in the anteroom, and a tall man, evidently in a rage, with an irregular, but bold and expressive face, and quite neatly dressed, strode over the threshold.

"Is n't he here?"—he asked, casting a swift glance around.

"Nikolái Eremyéitch is with the mistress,"—replied the cashier.—"Tell me what you want, Pável Andréitch: you can tell me. . . . What do you wish?"

"What do I want? You wish to know what I want?" (The cashier nodded his head in a sickly way.)—"I want to teach him a lesson, the fat-bellied wretch, the vile tale-bearing slanderer. . . I 'll teach him to tell tales!"

Pável flung himself on a chair.

"What do you mean, what do you mean, Pável Andréitch? Calm yourself. . . . . Are n't you ashamed? Don't you forget of whom you are speaking, Pável Andréitch!"—stammered the cashier.

"Of whom I 'm speaking? And what do I care, that he has been appointed head clerk! A pretty one they have picked out for the appointment, I must say! They 've actually let the goat into the vegetable-garden, one may say!"

"That will do, that will do, Pável Andréitch, that will do! stop that . . . what nonsense!"

"Well, Lísa Patríkyevna,[1] go wag thy tail and fawn! . . . I 'll wait for him,"—said Pável, angrily, and banged his hand down on the table. —"Ah, yonder he comes,"—he added, glancing out of the window:—"talk of the devil. . . . You are welcome!" (He rose.)

Nikolái Eremyéitch entered the office. His face was beaming with satisfaction, but at the sight of Pável he grew somewhat embarrassed.

"Good day, Nikolái Eremyéitch,"—said Pável, significantly, as he moved slowly toward him:—"good day."

The head clerk made no reply. The merchant's face made its appearance in the doorway.

"Why don't you deign to answer me?"—went on Pável.—"But, no . . . . no,"—he added:—"that 's not the point; nothing is to be gained by shouting and abuse. No, you 'd better tell me amicably, Nikolái Eremyéitch, why do you persecute me? why do you want to ruin me? Come, speak, speak."

"This is not the place to give you an explanation,"—replied the head clerk, not without agitation:—"and this is not the proper time. Only, I must confess that one thing amazes me: whence have you derived the idea that I want to ruin you, or that I am persecuting you? And how, in short, can I persecute you? You are not in my office."

[1] The Russian equivalent of "Reynard the Fox."—Translator.

"I should think not,"—replied Pável:—"that is the last straw! But why do you dissimulate, Nikolái Eremyéitch?—You understand me, you see."

"No, I don't understand you."

"Yes, you do."

"No,—by God, I don't!"

"And he swears into the bargain! Well, then, if it has come to that, tell me: come, you 're not afraid of God! Well, why can't you let the poor girl alone? What do you want of her?"

"Of whom are you speaking, Pável Andréitch?"—asked the fat man, with feigned amazement.

"Eka! you don't know, I suppose? I 'm speaking of Tatyána. Have the fear of God before your eyes—what are you avenging yourself for? Shame on you: you are a married man, you have children as old as I am. But I mean nothing else than . . . . . I want to marry: I am acting honourably."

"How am I to blame in the matter, Pável Andréitch? Our mistress will not allow you to marry: 't is her ladyship's will! What have I to do with that?"

"What have you to do with it? and have n't you and that old witch, the housekeeper, entered into collusion, I 'd like to know? Are n't you a calumniator, I 'd like to know, hey! Tell me, are n't you accusing an innocent young girl of

all sorts of fictitious things? It is n't thanks to your gracious offices, I suppose, that she has been appointed dish-washer instead of laundress? And they don't beat her, and keep her clad in striped ticking, by your grace? . . . Shame on you, shame on you, you old man! The first you know, you 'll be smitten with paralysis. . . . You will have to answer to God."

"Curse away, Pável Andréitch, curse away. . . . . You won't have a chance to curse long!"

Pável flared up.

"What? Hast thou taken it into thy head to threaten me?"—he began angrily.—"Dost think that I fear thee? No, brother, thou hast got hold of the wrong man! what have I to fear? . . . . I can earn my bread anywhere. . But thou—that 's another matter! Thou canst do nothing but dwell here, and slander, and steal. . . ."

"Just see how conceited he is!"—the clerk interrupted him, beginning to lose patience:—"a medical man, a plain medical man, an ordinary little peasant-surgeon; and just listen to him,—whew, what an important personage!"

"Yes, I am a peasant-surgeon, and were it not for that, your gracious person would now be rotting in the cemetery. . . . And 't was the Evil One who prompted me to cure him,"—he added, between his teeth.

"Thou didst cure me? . . . . No, thou didst

try to poison me; thou didst give me a potion of aloes,"—put in the clerk.

"And what if nothing but aloes would take effect on thee?"

"Aloes are prohibited by the medical authorities,"—went on Nikolái:—"I can enter a complaint about thee yet. . . . Thou didst try to murder me—that 's what! But the Lord did not permit."

"That will do, that will do, gentlemen,"—the cashier tried to speak. . . .

"Stop that!"—shouted the clerk.—"He tried to poison me! Dost thou understand that?"

"Much I care! . . . . Hearken to me, Nikolái Eremyéitch,"—said Pável in desperation:—"For the last time I entreat thee . . . . thou hast forced me to it—my patience is exhausted. Leave us in peace, dost thou understand? otherwise, by God, 't will be the worse for some one of you, I tell thee."

The fat man flew into a rage.

"I 'm not afraid of thee,"—he yelled:—"dost hear me, booby! I mastered thy father, I broke his horns for him,—let that be a warning for thee, look out!"

"Don't remind me of my father, Nikolái Eremyéitch, don't remind me of him!"

"Get out! I don't take any orders from thee!"

"Don't remind me of him, I tell thee!"

"And I tell thee, don't forget thyself. . . . As the mistress does not need thee in thy line, if she had to choose between us two, thou wouldst not be the winner, my dear little dove! No one is permitted to mutiny, look out!" (Pável was quivering with rage.)—"And the girl Tatyána is getting what she deserves. . . . Just wait, and she 'll get something worse."

Pável darted forward with upraised arms, and the clerk rolled heavily to the floor.

"Handcuff him, handcuff him!"—moaned Nikolái Eremyéitch. . . .

I will not undertake to describe the end of this scene. I am afraid I have wounded the sensibilities of the reader as it is.

I returned home the same day. A week later, I learned that Mme. Losnyakóff had retained both Pável and Nikolái in her service, but had banished the girl Tatyána; evidently, she was not wanted.

XII

THE WOLF

I WAS driving from the chase one evening alone in a racing-drozhky.[1] I was eight versts from my house; my good mare was stepping briskly along the dusty road, snorting and twitching her ears from time to time; my weary dog never quitted the hind wheels, as though he had been tied there. A thunder-storm was coming on. In front of me a huge, purplish cloud was slowly rising from behind the forest; overhead, and advancing to meet me, floated long, grey clouds; the willows were rustling and whispering with apprehension. The stifling heat suddenly gave way to a damp chill; the shadows swiftly thickened. I slapped the reins on the horse's back, descended into a ravine, crossed a dry brook all overgrown with scrub-willows, ascended a hillock, and drove into the forest. The road in front of me wound along amid thick clumps of hazel-bushes, and was already inundated with gloom; I advanced with difficulty. My drozhky

[1] The racing-drozhky, which is also much used in the country, consists of a plank attached (without springs) to four small wheels. The driver sits astride of the plank, with his feet on the shafts.—TRANSLATOR.

jolted over the firm roots of the centenarian oaks and lindens, which incessantly intersected the long, deep ruts—the traces of cart-wheels; my horse began to stumble. A strong wind suddenly began to drone aloft, the trees grew turbulent, big drops of rain pattered sharply and splashed on the leaves, the lightning and thunder burst forth, the rain poured in torrents. I drove on at a foot-pace and was speedily compelled to halt; my horse had stuck fast. I could not see a single object. I sheltered myself, after a fashion, under a wide-spreading bush. Bent double, with my face wrapped up, I was patiently awaiting the end of the storm, when, suddenly, by the gleam of a lightning flash, it seemed to me that I descried a tall figure on the road. I began to gaze attentively in that direction—the same figure sprang out of the earth, as it were, by my side.

"Who is this?"—asked a sonorous voice.

"Who are you yourself?"

"I 'm the forester here."

I mentioned my name.

"Ah, I know; you are on your way home?"

"Yes; but you see what a storm . . . ."

"Yes, it is a thunder-storm,"—replied the voice. A white flash of lightning illuminated the forester from head to foot; a short, crashing peal of thunder resounded immediately afterward. The rain poured down with redoubled force.

"It will not pass over very soon,"—continued the forester.

"What is to be done?"

"I 'll conduct you to my cottage, if you like,"—he said abruptly.

"Pray do."

"Please take your seat."

He stepped to the mare's head, took her by the bridle, and turned her from the spot. We set out. I clung to the cushion of the drozhky, which rocked like a skiff at sea, and called my dog. My poor mare splashed her hoofs heavily through the mire, slipping and stumbling: the forester swayed to right and left in front of the shafts, like a spectre. Thus we proceeded for quite a long time. At last my guide came to a halt.—"Here we are at home, master,"—he said, in a calm voice. A wicket-gate squeaked, several puppies began to bark in unison. I raised my head and by the glare of the lightning I descried a tiny hut, in the centre of a spacious yard, surrounded with a wattled hedge.[1] From one tiny window, a small light cast a dull gleam. The forester led the horse up to the porch, and knocked at the door. "Right away! Right away!"—resounded a shrill little voice, and a patter of bare feet became audible, the bolt

[1] In central and southern Russia, where timber is scarce, long boughs of trees are plaited into picturesque hedges, to replace board fences. Farm buildings frequently have their walls of the same wattled work.—TRANSLATOR.

screeched, and a little girl about twelve years of age, clad in a miserable little smock, girt about with a bit of list, and holding a lantern in her hand, made her appearance on the threshold.

"Light the gentleman,"—he said to her:—"and I will put his carriage under the shed."

The little lass glanced at me, and entered the cottage. I followed her. The forester's cottage consisted of a single room, smoke-begrimed, low-ceiled, and bare, without any sleeping-shelf over the oven, and without any partitions; a tattered sheepskin coat hung against the wall. On the wall-bench lay a single-barrelled gun; in one corner trailed a heap of rags; two large pots stood beside the oven. A pine-knot was burning on the table, sputtering mournfully, and was on the point of going out. Exactly in the middle of the room hung a cradle, suspended from the end of a long pole.[1] The little maid extinguished the lantern, seated herself on a tiny bench, and began to rock the cradle with her left hand, while with her right she put the pine-knot in order. I looked about, and my heart grew sad: it is not cheerful to enter a peasant's hut by

[1] A stout, long, supple sapling is fixed firmly against one wall. The tip is in the middle of the room, and from it is suspended the cradle, which depresses it, and acts as a natural spring. The cradle may be (like Peter the Great's, which is in the museum of the Kremlin in Moscow) of strong linen, distended by poles at the ends, hammock-fashion; or even of a splint basket. It is often rocked from a distance by means of a rope attached to one of the angle-cords.—TRANSLATOR.

night. The baby in the cradle was breathing heavily and rapidly.

"Is it possible that thou art alone here?"—I asked the little girl.

"Yes,"—she articulated, almost inaudibly.

"Art thou the forester's daughter?"

"Yes,"—she whispered.

The door creaked, and the forester stepped across the threshold, bending his head as he did so. He picked up the lantern from the floor, went to the table, and ignited the wick.

"Probably you are not accustomed to a pine-knot,"—he said, tossing back his curls.

I looked at him. Rarely has it been my fortune to behold such a fine, dashing fellow. He was tall of stature, broad-shouldered, and splendidly built. From beneath his dripping shirt, which was open on the breast, his mighty muscles stood forth prominently. A curly black beard covered half of his surly and manly face; from beneath his broad eyebrows, which met over his nose, small brown eyes gazed gallantly forth. He set his hands lightly on his hips, and stood before me.

I thanked him, and asked his name.

"My name is Fomá" (Thomas), he replied —"but my nickname is 'The Wolf.'"[1]

"Ah, are you The Wolf?"

[1] In the Government of Orel, a solitary, surly man is called a wolf *(biriúk)*.

I gazed at him with redoubled interest. . From my Ermoláï and from others I had often heard about the forester—The Wolf, whom all the peasants round about feared like fire. According to their assertions, never before had there existed in the world such a master of his craft. "He gives no one a chance to carry off trusses of brushwood, no matter what the hour may be; even at midnight he drops down on you like snow on your head, and you need not think of offering resistance—he 's as strong and as crafty as the devil. . . . And it 's impossible to catch him by any means whatever; neither with liquor, nor with money; he won't yield to any allurement. More than once good men have made preparations to put him out of the world; but no, he does n't give them a chance."

That was the way the neighbouring peasants expressed themselves about The Wolf.

"So thou art The Wolf,"—I repeated.—"I 've heard of thee, brother. They say that thou givest no quarter to any one."

He pulled his axe from his girdle, sat down on the floor, and began to chop a pine-knot.

"Hast thou no housewife?"—I asked him.

"No,"—he replied, and brandished his axe fiercely.

"She is dead, apparently."

"No—yes—she is dead,"—he added, and turned away.

I said nothing; he raised his eyes, and looked at me.

"She ran away with a petty burgher who came along,"—he remarked, with a harsh smile. The little girl dropped her eyes; the baby waked up, and began to cry; the girl went to the cradle. —"There, give him that,"—said The Wolf, thrusting into her hand a dirty horn.[1]—"And she abandoned him,"—he went on, in a low tone, pointing at the baby. He walked to the door, and turned round.

"Probably, master,"—he said,—"you cannot eat our bread; and I have nothing but bread."

"I am not hungry."

"Well, suit yourself. I would boil the samovár for you, only I have no tea. . . I'll go and see how your horse is getting along."

He went out and slammed the door. I surveyed my surroundings. The hut seemed to me more doleful than before. The bitter odour of chilled smoke oppressed my breathing. The little girl did not stir from her place, and did not raise her eyes; from time to time, she gave the cradle a gentle shove, or timidly hitched up on her shoulder her smock, which had slipped down; her bare legs hung motionless.

"What is thy name?"—I asked.

[1] The Russian peasants use a cow's horn, with a cow's teat tied over the tip, as a nursing-bottle. The dried teats are for sale in the common street-markets.—Translator.

"Ulíta,"—she said, drooping her sad little face still lower than before. The forester entered, and seated himself on the wall-bench.

"The thunder-storm is passing over,"—he remarked, after a brief silence;—"if you command, I will guide you out of the forest."

I rose. The Wolf picked up his gun, and inspected the priming.

"What is that for?"—I inquired.

"They are stealing in the forest. They 're felling a tree at the Hare's Ravine,"—he added, in reply to my glance of inquiry.

"Can it be heard from here?"

"It can from the yard."

We went out together. The rain had ceased. Heavy masses of cloud were piled up in the distance, long streaks of lightning flashed forth from time to time; but over our heads the dark-blue sky was visible; here and there, little stars twinkled through the thin, swiftly-flying clouds. The outlines of the trees, besprinkled with rain and fluttered by the wind, were beginning to stand forth from the gloom. We began to listen. The forester took off his cap, and dropped his eyes. "The—there," he said suddenly, and stretched out his arm;—"you see what a night they have chosen."

I heard nothing save the rustling of the leaves. The Wolf led my horse out from under the shed. —"But I shall probably let him slip, as matters

stand,"—he added aloud.—" I 'll go with thee, may I? "—" All right,"—he replied, and backed the horse.—" We 'll catch him in a trice, and then I 'll guide you out. Come on! "

We set off, The Wolf in advance, I behind him. God knows how he found the road, but he rarely halted, and then only to listen to the sound of the axe.—" You see,"—he muttered between his teeth.—" You hear? do you hear? "—" But where? "—The Wolf shrugged his shoulders. We descended into a ravine, the wind died down for an instant, measured blows distinctly reached my ear. The Wolf glanced at me, and shook his head. On we went, over the wet ferns and nettles. A dull, prolonged roar rang out.....

" He has felled it,"—muttered The Wolf.

In the meantime the sky had continued to clear; it was almost light in the forest. We made our way out of the ravine at last.—" Wait here,"—whispered the forester to me, crouched down, and raising his gun aloft, vanished among the bushes. I began to listen with strained intentness. Athwart the constant noise of the wind, I thought I discerned faint sounds not far away: an axe was cautiously hewing branches, a horse was neighing.

" Where art thou going? Halt! "—the iron voice of The Wolf suddenly thundered out. Another voice shrieked plaintively, after the fashion of a hare. . . . . A struggle began.—" Thou

li-iest, thou li-iest,"—The Wolf kept repeating, panting the while; "thou shalt not escape."—I dashed forward in the direction of the noise, and ran to the scene of battle, stumbling at every step. Beside the felled tree on the ground, the forester was tumbling about: he held the thief beneath him, and was engaged in binding the man's hands behind his back with his girdle. I stepped up. The Wolf rose, and set him on his feet. I beheld a peasant, soaked through, in rags, with a long, dishevelled beard. A miserable little nag, half-covered with a small, stiff mat, stood hard by, with the running-gear of a peasant-cart. The forester uttered not a word; the peasant, also, maintained silence, and merely shook his head.

"Let him go,"—I whispered in The Wolf's ear.—"I will pay for the tree."

The Wolf, without replying, grasped the horse's foretop with his left hand; with his right he held the thief by the girdle.—"Come, move on, booby!"—he ejaculated surlily.

"Take my axe yonder,"—muttered the peasant.—"Why should it be wasted?"—said the forester, and picked up the axe. We started. I walked in the rear. . . . . The rain began to descend again in a drizzle, and soon was pouring in torrents. With difficulty we made our way to the cottage. The Wolf turned the captured nag loose in the yard, led the peasant into the

house, loosened the knot of the girdle, and seated him in one corner. The little girl, who had almost fallen asleep by the oven, sprang up, and began to stare at us in dumb affright. I seated myself on the wall-bench.

"Ekh, what a downpour!"—remarked the forester.—"We must wait until it stops. Would n't you like to lie down?"

"Thanks."

"I would lock him up in the lumber-room, on account of your grace,"—he went on, pointing at the peasant,—"but, you see, the bolt . . . . ."

"Leave him there,—don't touch him,"—I interrupted The Wolf.

The peasant darted a sidelong glance at me. I inwardly registered a vow that I would save the poor fellow at any cost. He sat motionless on the wall-bench. By the light of the lantern I was able to scrutinise his dissipated, wrinkled face, his pendent, yellow eyebrows, his thin limbs. . . . The little girl lay down on the floor, at his very feet, and fell asleep again. The Wolf sat by the table, with his head propped on his hand. A grasshopper was chirping in one corner. . . . The rain beat down upon the roof, and dripped down the windows; we all maintained silence.

"Fomá Kúzmitch,"—began the peasant, suddenly, in a dull, cracked voice:—"hey, there, Fomá Kúzmitch!"

"What dost thou want?"

"Let me go."

The Wolf made no reply.

"Let me go. . . . . Hunger drove me to it. . . . . Let me go."

"I know you,"—retorted the forester, grimly. "You 're all alike in your village,—a pack of thieves."

"Let me go,"—repeated the peasant.—"The manager . . . . we 're ruined, that 's what it is . . . . . let me go!"

"Ruined! . . . . No one ought to steal!"

"Let me go, Fomá Kúzmitch . . . . . don't destroy me. Thy master, as thou knowest, will devour me, so he will."

The Wolf turned away. The peasant was twitching all over, as though racked with fever. He kept shaking his head, and his breath came irregularly.

"Let me go,"—he repeated, with mournful desperation.—"Let me go, for God's sake, let me go! I 'll pay, that I will, God is my witness. As God is my witness, hunger drove me to it . . . . . the children were squalling, thou knowest how it is thyself. 'T is hard on a man, that it is."

"All the same, don't go a-thieving."

"My horse,"—went on the peasant,—"there 's my horse, take it if thou wilt . . . . 't is my only beast . . . . . let me go!"

"Impossible, I tell thee. I, also, am a subordinate; I shall be held responsible. And it is n't right, either, to connive at thy deed."

"Let me go! Poverty, Fomá Kúzmitch, poverty, that 's what 's the trouble . . . . . let me go!"

"I know thee!"

"But do let me go!"

"Eh, what 's the use of arguing with thee; sit still, or I 'll give it to thee, understand? Dost thou not see the gentleman?"

The poor fellow dropped his eyes. . . . . The Wolf yawned, and laid his head on the table. The rain had not stopped. I waited to see what would happen.

The peasant suddenly straightened himself up. His eyes began to blaze, and the colour flew to his face.—"Well, go ahead, devour! Go ahead, oppress! Go ahead!"—he began, screwing up his eyes, and dropping the corners of his lips:—"Go ahead, damned murderer of the soul, drink Christian blood, drink!"

The forester turned round.

"I 'm talking to thee,—to thee, Asiatic, blood-drinker,—to thee!"

"Art drunk, that thou hast taken it into thy head to curse!"—said the forester in amazement.—"Hast thou gone crazy?"

"Drunk! . . . . It was n't on thy money, thou damned soul-murderer, thou wild beast, beast, beast!"

"Akh, thou . . . . I 'll give it to thee!"

"What do I care? 'T is all one to me—I shall perish anyway; what can I do without a horse? Kill me—it comes to the same thing; whether with hunger, or thus, it makes no difference. Let everything go to destruction: wife, children, —let them all perish. . . . But just wait, thou shalt hear from us!"

The Wolf half-rose to his feet.

"Kill, kill,"—the peasant began again, in a savage voice: "Kill, go ahead, kill. . . . ." (The little girl sprang hastily from the floor, and riveted her eyes on him.)—"Kill, kill!"

"Hold thy tongue!"—thundered the forester, and advanced a couple of strides.

"Enough, that will do, Fomá Kúzmitch,"—I shouted:—"let him alone. . . . Don't bother with him. . . ."

"I won't hold my tongue,"—went on the unfortunate man.—"It makes no difference how he murders me. Thou soul-murderer, thou wild beast, hanging is too good for thee. . . . . But just wait a bit. . . Thou hast not long to vaunt thyself! They 'll strangle thy throat for thee. Just wait a bit!"

The Wolf seized him by the shoulder. . . I rushed to the rescue of the peasant.

"Don't touch us, master!"—the forester yelled at me.

I did not fear his threats, and was on the point

of stretching forth my arm when, to my extreme amazement, with one twist of the hand, he tore the girdle from the peasant's elbows, grasped him by the collar, banged his cap down over his eyes, flung open the door, and thrust him out.

"Take thyself and thy horse off to the devil!" —he shouted after him:—"and look out, another time I'll . . . ."

He came back into the cottage, and began to poke about in the corner.

"Well, Wolf,"—I said at last;—"thou hast astonished me. I see that thou art a splendid young fellow."

"Ekh, stop that, master,"—he interrupted me, with vexation.—"Only, please don't tell about it. Now I'd better show you your way," —he added;—"because you can't wait for the rain to stop."

The wheels of the peasant's cart rumbled through the yard.

"You see, he has dragged himself off,"—he muttered;—"but I'll give it to him!"

Half an hour later he bade me farewell on the edge of the forest.

XIII

TWO LANDED PROPRIETORS

I HAVE already had the honour of introducing to you, my indulgent readers, several of my gentlemen neighbours; permit me now, therefore, by the way (for us writers everything is "by the way"), to make you acquainted with two more landed proprietors, on whose property I have often hunted, extremely worthy, well-intentioned individuals, who enjoy the universal respect of several counties.

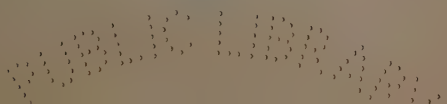
I will first describe to you retired Major-General Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch Khvalýnsky. Picture to yourselves a tall man, finely proportioned in days gone by, but now somewhat pot-bellied, though not in the least decrepit, not even aged, a man of mature years, in the very prime of life, as the expression is. His once regular and still agreeable features have changed somewhat, 't is true; his cheeks have grown pendent in jowls, numerous radiating wrinkles have clustered round his eyes, some teeth are already missing, as Saadi said, according to Púshkin's statement; his light-chestnut hair—all that is left of it, at least—has turned lilac, thanks to a preparation bought at the Romný horse-fair

from a Jew who gave himself out as being an Armenian; but Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch steps out alertly, has a ringing laugh, clanks his spurs, twirls his moustache, calls himself, in short, an old cavalryman, while it is a well-known fact that real old men never call themselves old men. He generally wears a surtout buttoned up to the throat, a tall stock with a starched collar, and trousers of a speckled grey, of military cut; and he wears his hat straight on his forehead, leaving the whole back of his head outside. He is a very kind-hearted man, but with decidedly peculiar ideas and habits. For example: he is utterly unable to treat noblemen who are not wealthy nor of official rank as his equals. In talking with them, he generally gazes at them askance, with his cheek leaning heavily on his firm, white collar, or he will suddenly take and illumine them with a clear, impassive stare, maintain silence, and wriggle the whole of his skin on his head under his hair; he even pronounces his words in a different way, and does not say, for instance: "Thanks, Pável Vasílitch," or: "Please come hither, Mikhaílo Iványitch," but: "T'anks, Páll 'Asílich," or: "Pe-ease come hither, Mikhal' 'Vánitch." And he behaves in a still stranger manner to people who stand on the lower rungs of the society ladder: he does not look at them at all, and before announcing his wishes to them, or giving them an order, he repeats several times in suc-

cession, with a preoccupied and dreamy aspect: "*What*'s thy name? . . . *What*'s thy name?"—generally with a remarkably sharp emphasis on the first word, "what," and uttering the rest very rapidly, which imparts to his whole mode of speech a pretty close likeness to the cry of the male quail. He is a frightfully fussy man, and a skinflint, and a bad farmer: he has taken to himself as manager a retired quartermaster, a Little Russian, a remarkably stupid man. However, in the matter of estate management, no one in our parts has, so far, outdone a certain important Petersburg official, who, on perceiving from his overseer's report that grain-kilns on his estate were subject to frequent conflagrations, which caused the loss of much grain, issued stringent orders that, henceforth, no sheaves were to be placed in the kiln until the fire was completely extinguished. This same dignitary once took it into his head to sow all his fields with poppies, in consequence of what was, apparently, an extremely simple calculation. "Poppies are more expensive than rye," said he: "therefore, it will be more profitable to plant poppies." And he also commanded his peasant women to wear kokóshniki [1] made after a pattern

[1] The *kokóshnik* is the round, coronet-shaped head-dress of the peasant women. It varies in shape and appellation in different districts, *kokóshnik* being the generic name. The *kíka* is tall and pointed in front, like the mitre of a Roman or an Anglican bishop. —TRANSLATOR.

sent from Petersburg; and, as a matter of fact, to this day the peasant women on his estates wear the round-coronet head-dress . . . . . only, it runs up to a sharp point at the front, like a kíka. . . . . But let us return to Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch. Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch is terribly fond of the fair sex, and, just as soon as he catches sight of a pretty person on the boulevard of his county town, he instantly sets out in pursuit of her, but also immediately takes to limping —which is a noteworthy circumstance. He is fond of playing cards, but only with persons of a lower class; they say to him, "Your Excellency," and he can chide them and scold them to his heart's content. But when he chances to play with the Governor, or with some official personage, a wonderful change takes place in him: he smiles, and nods his head, and stares with all his eyes,—he is fairly redolent of honey. . . . . He even loses without complaint. Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch reads little, and while he is reading he keeps his moustache and his brows in incessant motion, as though a wave were flowing over his face, from below upward. Especially noteworthy is this undulating movement on Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch's face, when he happens (in the presence of visitors, of course) to run through the columns of the *Journal des Débats*. He plays quite an important part at the elections, but declines the honourable post of Marshal of



the Nobility out of parsimony.—"Gentlemen,"—he generally says to the nobles who approach him, and he says it in a voice filled with patronage and independence:—"I am greatly obliged for the honour; but I have decided to devote my leisure to solitude."—And, having uttered these words, he turns his head several times to right and left, and then, with dignity, drops his chin and his cheeks on his neckerchief. In his youth, he served as adjutant to some distinguished person, whom he never mentions otherwise than by his baptismal name and patronymic; 't is said, that he took upon himself not alone the duties of an adjutant,—that, for instance, donning his full parade-uniform, and even fastening the hooks, he steamed his superior in the bath—but one cannot believe every rumour. Moreover, General Khvalýnsky is not fond of referring to his career in the service, which is, on the whole, rather odd; it appears, also, that he has not been to war. General Khvalýnsky lives in a small house, alone; he has never experienced conjugal bliss in his life, and therefore, to this day, he is regarded as a marriageable man, and even a good catch. On the other hand, his housekeeper, a woman of three-and-thirty years, black-eyed, black-browed, plump, fresh, and with a moustache, wears starched gowns on week-days, and puts on muslin sleeves of a Sunday.[1] Vyátcheslaff

[1] "Sleeves," in central and southern Russia, means the chemise, of which the *full sleeves* and the guimpe-like neck portion are

Ilariónovitch is happy at great, formal dinners, given by landed proprietors in honour of governors and other powers that be: then he is, so to speak, thoroughly in his element. On such occasions he sits, if not at the right hand of the Governor, at least not very far from him; at the beginning of the banquet, he is generally engaged in maintaining the sense of his own dignity, and throwing himself back in his chair, but not turning his head, he drops a sidelong look upon the round napes and standing collars of the guests; on the other hand, toward the end of the dinner, he cheers up, begins to smile on all sides (he has been smiling in the direction of the Governor from the very beginning of the feast), and sometimes even proposes a toast in honour of the fair sex, "the ornament of our planet," as he phrases it. General Khvalýnsky also makes a far from bad appearance at all solemn and public sessions, examinations, assemblies, and exhibitions; and he is, moreover, a master-hand at approaching an ecclesiastical dignitary and receiving his blessing.[1] Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch's people do not shout and create an uproar when they meet another carriage at the cross-roads or ferries, and in other similar circumstances; on

visible above the *sarafán,* or full frock. The *sarafán* itself has no sleeves, and its upper edge passes under the arms, from which narrow straps pass over the shoulders.—TRANSLATOR.

[1] Considerable art and practice are required to receive a bishop's hand properly and gracefully, on the upturned palms, held in boat-shape, raise it reverently to the lips, and kiss it, in return for the cross of blessing bestowed.—TRANSLATOR.

the contrary, when pushing people aside, or calling the carriage, they say, in an agreeable guttural baritone voice: "Pray, pray, allow General Khvalýnsky to pass through," or: "General Khvalýnsky's equipage." . . . . Khvalýnsky's equipage is, truth to tell, of rather ancient fashion; his lackeys' liveries are decidedly threadbare (that they are grey, with trimmings of red braid, it is hardly necessary to mention);[1] the horses, also, are somewhat aged, and have seen hard service; but Vyátcheslaff Ilariónovitch makes no pretensions to foppishness, and does not even consider it becoming to his rank to throw dust in the eyes of the public. Khvalýnsky is not endowed with any special gift of language, or, perhaps, he has no opportunity to display his eloquence, because he not only will not tolerate discussion, but even rejoinder in general, and sedulously avoids all long conversations, particularly with young persons. 'T is safer, in fact; otherwise, with the present generation of men, a calamity might befall: they might immediately become insubordinate and lose their reverence. In the presence of persons of superior rank, Khvalýnsky maintains silence, in the majority of cases, but to persons of a lower rank, whom, evidently, he despises, but with whom alone he consorts, he makes abrupt and harsh speeches,

[1] The regular prerogative of a general: the cape-coats are trimmed with rows of scarlet braid.—TRANSLATOR.

incessantly employing expressions such as the following: "But what you are saying is nonsense;" or: "I find myself compelled, in short, m' dea' si', to call to your attention," or: "But, after all, you ought to know with whom you are dealing," and so forth. He is especially dreaded by postmasters, permanent justices of the peace, and station superintendents. He never invites any one to his own house, and lives, so says rumour, after the fashion of a miser. Notwithstanding all which, he is a very fine landed proprietor,—"an ex-soldier, a disinterested man, with principles, *vieux grognard,*" his neighbours say of him. One governmental procurator permits himself to smile when General Khvalýnsky's excellent and solid qualities are referred to in his presence,—but what will not envy do! . . . . . .

However, let us pass on to the other landed proprietor.

Mardáry Apollónitch Stegunóff does not resemble Khvalýnsky in any respect. 'T is not likely that he was ever in the service anywhere, and he never has regarded himself as a beauty. Mardáry Apollónitch is a short, plump, bald old gentleman, with a double chin and a good-sized paunch. He is very hospitable and fond of jesting; he lives, as the saying is, at his ease; winter and summer he goes about in a wadded striped dressing-gown. In one point only does he agree

with General Khvalýnsky: he, also, is a bachelor. He has five hundred souls.[1] Mardáry Apollónitch busies himself with his estate in a pretty superficial manner; ten years ago he purchased from Butenop, in Moscow,—in order not to be behind his age,—a threshing-machine, locked it up in a barn, and relapsed into contentment. Occasionally, on a fine summer's day, he will order his racing-drozhky to be harnessed up, and will drive to the fields to take a look at the grain and to pluck corn-flowers. Mardáry Apollónitch lives thoroughly in the ancient fashion. And his house, also, is of ancient construction: the anteroom, as is fitting, reeks of kvas, tallow candles, and leather; there, also, on the right, is a buffet, with smoke-pipes[2] and towels; in the dining-room are family portraits, flies, a huge pot of geranium, and a jingling piano; in the drawing-room are three couches, three tables, two mirrors, and a hoarse clock with carved hands of blackened enamel and bronze; in the study are a table with papers, a screen of bluish hue with small pictures pasted on it which have been cut from various publications of the last century, a cupboard filled with stinking books, spiders, and black dust, a fat arm-chair, an Italian window, a nailed-up door leading to the garden. . . . .

[1] That is, male serfs. The women were not included in the Revision Lists.—Translator.

[2] For preparing the samovár: the pipes, leading to the outer air, being attached to the samovár at need.—Translator.

In a word, everything is as it should be. Mardáry Apollónitch has a multitude of domestics, and all are garbed in ancient fashion: in long, blue kaftans, with tall collars, trousers of a muddy colour, and short, yellowish waistcoats. They address visitors as: "Dear little father." His farming operations are presided over by a peasant bailiff, who has a beard that spreads all over his sheepskin coat; his house, by a wrinkled and stingy old woman, with her head enveloped in a light-brown kerchief. In Mardáry Apollónitch's stables stand thirty horses, of varied quality; he drives out in a home-made calash, weighing one hundred and fifty puds.[1] He receives visitors very cordially, and entertains them gloriously,—that is to say, thanks to the stupefying properties of Russian cookery, he deprives them of all possibility of occupying themselves with anything but preference until close on nightfall. But he himself never occupies himself with anything whatsoever, and has even ceased to peruse the "Dream-book." But there are still a good many landed proprietors of that sort, among us in Russia—the question is: To what end have I begun to speak about him, and why? . . . . So now, permit me, in lieu of a reply, to tell you the story of one of my visits to Mardáry Apollónitch.

I arrived at his house in summer, about seven

[1] A pud is a little over thirty-six pounds.—Translator.

o'clock in the evening. The Vigil service had just ended,[1] and the priest, evidently a very timid young man, who had not been long out of the theological seminary, was sitting in the drawing-room, near the door, on the very edge of a chair. Mardáry Apollónitch received me very affectionately, according to his wont: he sincerely rejoiced over every guest, and, in general, he was a very kind-hearted man. The priest rose, and picked up his hat.

"Wait, wait, bátiushka,"[2] said Mardáry Apollónitch, without releasing my hand.—"Don't go. . I have ordered them to bring thee some vódka."

"I don't drink, sir,"—murmured the priest in confusion, and flushed scarlet to his very ears.

"What nonsense!"—replied Mardáry Apollónitch:—"Míshka! Yúshka! vódka for the bátiushka!"

Yúshka, a tall, thin old man of eighty years, entered with a wine-glass of vódka on a dark-painted tray variegated with spots of flesh-colour.

The priest began to refuse.

[1] The All-Night Vigil, consisting of Vespers (or Compline) and Matins, which is obligatory before the celebration of the morning Liturgy, may be read in an unconsecrated building, even by a layman, and is not infrequently requested by the devout.—TRANSLATOR.

[2] "Dear little father": the form of address for ecclesiastics, in particular.—TRANSLATOR.

"Drink, bátiushka, don't put on airs, it is n't nice,"—remarked the squire, reprovingly.

The poor young man obeyed.

"Well, now thou mayest go, bátiushka."

The priest began to bow his farewell.

"Come, very good, very good, go along. . . . A very fine man,"—went on Mardáry Apollónitch, glancing after him:—"I 'm very well satisfied with him, only—he 's young yet. But how about you, my dear fellow?[1] . . . . How are you? what have you been doing with yourself? Let 's go out on the balcony—just see what a magnificent evening it is."

We went out on the balcony, sat down, and began to chat. Mardáry Apollónitch glanced down, and suddenly became frightfully agitated.

"Whose hens are those? whose hens are those?"—he began to shout:—"whose hens are those running in the garden? . . . . Yúshka! Yúshka! go, find out instantly whose hens those are running in the garden!—Whose hens are those? How many times have I forbidden it—how many times have I spoken about that?"

Off rushed Yúshka.

"What disorder!" Mardáry Apollónitch kept reiterating:—"'t is frightful!"

The unlucky hens, as I now recall the circumstances, two speckled and one white with a crest,

[1] *Bátiushka,* in addressing social equals, has this sense.—TRANSLATOR.

continued to stalk about very quietly under the apple-trees, now and then giving vent to their feelings by a prolonged cackling, when suddenly Yúshka, hatless and stick in hand, and three other adult house-serfs, all fell upon them energetically and in unison. The fun began. The hens shrieked, flapped their wings, cackled deafeningly; the house-serfs rushed about, stumbled, and fell; the master, from the balcony, yelled like a fanatic: "Catch, catch, catch, catch them! catch, catch, catch them! . . . Whose hens are those—whose hens are those?"

At last, one of the men succeeded in seizing the crested hen and squeezing her throat to the ground, and, at the same moment, over the hedge of the garden leaped a little girl of eleven years, all dishevelled and with a switch in her hand.

"Hey, so that's the owner of the hens!" exclaimed the squire, triumphantly:—"Ermíl the coachman's hens! There, he has sent his Natálka to drive them home—I wonder why he did n't send Parásha,"—added the squire in an undertone, and grinned significantly.—"Hey, Yúshka! drop those hens: catch Natálka for me."

But before the panting Yúshka could overtake the frightened little maid, the housekeeper made her appearance from somewhere or other, grasped her by the arm, and slapped her several times on the back.

"That 's right, that 's right,"—chimed in the squire,—"te, te, te! te, te, te!—But take the hens away from her, Avdótya,"—he added in a loud voice, and, turning to me with a radiant countenance:—"What a hunt, was n't it, my dear fellow, hey?—Just look, I 'm all in a perspiration."

And Mardáry Apollónitch burst out laughing.

We remained on the balcony. The evening really was extremely fine.

Tea was served.

"Pray tell me,"—I began,—"Mardáry Apollónitch: are those your homesteads transplanted over yonder, on the highway, beyond the ravine?"

"Yes—why?"

"How could you do such a thing, Mardáry Apollónitch? Why, that 's a sin. The peasants have been assigned to wretched, cramped little huts; there is n't a single tree to be seen all around; there 's not even a pond; there is only one well, and that is good for nothing. Is it possible that you could find no other spot?—And 't is said that you have even deprived them of their old hemp-patches?"

"But what is one to do with the boundary-survey?" replied Mardáry Apollónitch. "This is where the survey sits with me." (He pointed to the nape of his neck.) "And I foresee no profit whatever from that survey. And as for

my having deprived them of their hemp-patches and ponds, or not having dug any there,—why, my dear fellow, I know my own business. I 'm a simple man,—I proceed in the good old way. In my opinion, if one is a gentleman—why, let him be a gentleman; if he 's a peasant—then let him be a peasant.—So there you have it."

Of course, it was impossible to make any answer to such a clear and convincing evasion.

"And besides,"—he went on:—"they are bad, disgraced peasants. There are two families there, in particular: my late father, even,—God grant him the kingdom of heaven!—did not favour them, was very far from favouring them. And I take this as a sign, I must tell you: if the father is a thief, the son is a thief also; you may say what you like—oh, blood, blood is a great thing!"

In the meantime the air had become perfectly quiet. Only now and then did the breeze blow in gusts, and, as it died down, for the last time, around the house, it wafted to our ears measured blows which followed one another quickly, resounding from the direction of the stables. Mardáry Apollónitch had only just raised his saucer of tea to his lips, and was already inflating his nostrils, without which, as every one knows, not a single genuine primitive Russian imbibes tea, —but he paused, listened, nodded his head, took a sip, and setting the saucer on the table, he ar-

ticulated, with the most good-natured of smiles, and as though involuntarily keeping time to the blows: "Tchiúki-tchiúki-tchiúk! tchiúki-tchiúk! tchiúki-tchiúk!"

"What 's that?"—I asked in amazement.

"Why, by my orders, that mischievous monkey is being whipped yonder.—Do you know Vásya the butler?"

"What Vásya?"

"Why, the one who waited on us at dinner a little while ago. The one who wears such huge side-whiskers."

The fiercest wrath could not have withstood the clear and gentle gaze of Mardáry Apollónitch.

"What do you mean, young man, what do you mean?"—he said, shaking his head. "Am I a malefactor, I 'd like to know, that you stare at me like that? Whom he loveth, he chasteneth: you know that yourself."

A quarter of an hour later I bade Mardáry Apollónitch farewell. As I drove through the village, I caught sight of Vásya the butler. He was walking along the street, nibbling nuts. I ordered my coachman to stop the horses, and called him to me.

"Well, brother, so they have been flogging thee to-day?"—I asked him.

"And how do you know?"—answered Vásya.

"Thy master told me."

"The master himself?"

"What did he order thee to be whipped for?"

"I deserved it, dear little father, I deserved it. We are not whipped for trifles; that's not the custom with us—naw, naw. Our master is not that sort of a man; our master—why, you could n't find such another master in the whole government."

"Drive on!"—I said to my coachman. "Here's ancient Russia for you!"—I said to myself, on my homeward journey.

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